Draft Environment Impact Statement for the Proposed New Buffalo Convention Center, Buffalo, Erie County, New York

Volume I

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Lead Agency:

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Executive Summary

Erie County owns and operates the existing Buffalo Convention Center located in downtown Buffalo on Franklin Street between Court and Mohawk Streets. The existing center, constructed in 1978, is a 180,000 square foot, two-story building with a 63,000-square foot main exhibition floor on the upper level. There is no on-site parking at the existing center and the closest hotel is the 400-room Hyatt Regency, which is linked directly to the convention center by a second floor-level pedestrian bridge.

In its current condition, this facility has been determined by the County and the Buffalo-Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to be out-dated, obsolete, and non-competitive with other peer cites in competing to attract out-of-town conventions. It has also been losing its share of regional trade shows, meetings, and other events to other local venues due to factors such as parking, and condition of facilities.

This Draft EIS presents objective facts and other relevant information concerning the location, construction, and operation of a proposed new convention center in Buffalo, New York. The purpose of the Draft EIS is to allow Erie County (as the Lead Agency) to make a reasoned and informed decision regarding how to proceed with the proposed action. The Draft EIS does not make a recommendation or arrive at a conclusion regarding the best or most appropriate course of action. That decision is the responsibility of the Lead Agency, based on information herein, and on public input.

It should be noted that no decision or determination has been made by the Lead Agency regarding which alternative to pursue.

Proposed Action

As identified in the Positive Declaration and Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft EIS, the proposed action to be evaluated in the

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the New Buffalo Convention Center includes the following major elements:

- Construction of a new 400,000- to 425,000-gross-square-foot convention center with a 125,000-square-foot main exhibit hall in downtown Buffalo, New York.; and

- Evaluation of the potential to accommodate a headquarters-quality hotel within or adjacent to the selected project site as well as construction of a minimum-1,250-space parking facility.

For the purposes of comparative evaluation in this EIS, the preferred site for construction of a new Buffalo Convention Center is the Mohawk site. Based on previous studies conducted by Erie County and the CVB, the Mohawk site was identified as the preferred location because of its proximity to the city's CBD and major transportation routes, as well as easy pedestrian access to an existing hotel, the city's entertainment and theater districts, and other cultural amenities.

The Mohawk site is an 11-acre site bounded by Main Street on the west, Broadway on the south, Huron Street on the North, and Oak Street on the east. The optimal location for a new 400-room hotel would be the Niagara Mohawk Building located at Huron Street and Genesee Street, adjacent to the site. This option would involve relocation of Niagara Mohawk's operations, as well as the renovation and expansion of that building. However, a detailed engineering feasibility analysis associated with converting this former office building into a modern headquarters-style hotel has not been conducted as part of this DEIS.

The preferred status given to the Mohawk Site does not conclude or imply that this site has been selected or that other alternatives have been eliminated from consideration. All alternatives discussed below are being considered by Erie County. No site or option has been selected. The purpose of this Draft EIS is not to conclude which site is best, but to present the information required for the Lead Agency to make a reasonable and informed decision.

Development of the project would involve an estimated cost of $235 million with an approximate State and County expenditure of between $173.1 and $198.9 million, depending on the alternative chosen. This estimate of the cost to taxpayers is based on a $166.5 million cost for the convention center and parking garage and the estimated public funding portion of a $66.8 million headquarters-

quality hotel. Major costs associated with this project include site preparation (land acquisition and relocation, site clearing and demolition, infrastructure placement) and construction of the Convention Center, parking garage, and hotel. It should be noted that economic impacts of construction are based on total construction costs regardless of the funding source, whether private or public.

Summary of Alternatives

Pursuant to SEQR, a description and analysis of a range of alternatives are required to ensure the selection of a preferred alternative that best meets the project objectives and that represents the most feasible option based on environmental, social, and economic considerations. The identification and analysis of alternatives is integral to the overall process of selecting the site for a new convention center.

Through this DEIS, the County also is considering other alternatives to new construction on the Mohawk site, including:

- New construction on the Waterfront site,
- Expansion/renovation of the existing convention center facility,
- New construction at other sites identified during scoping,
- An alternatively sized facility,
- The No-Action Alternative, and
- A Modified No-Action Alternative.

The No-Action Alternative involves keeping the facility in its current condition and making no significant changes or improvements in order to make it more competitive. The DEIS estimates that if current trends, which are not addressed by any meaningful capital improvements to the center, were to continue, there would be a significant and steep decline in facility usage that would result not only in a loss of national conventions, but a loss of trade shows and local consumer shows as well. The expected number of out-of-town conventioneers would fall 25% from the Year 2000 estimate of 41,667 to 31,385 in 2007. The economic impacts of this alternative are presented in Appendix C.

The Modified No-Action Alternative involves making major renovations and improvements to the existing facility (currently estimated at $10 million) in order to maintain current market share and

minimize the projected decline in facility usage, total attendance, and resultant economic impacts to the region. The most important improvement, in addition to cosmetic and technological improvements, would be to make approximately 300 parking spaces available very close to the existing convention center, which can be accomplished within the City of Buffalo 's current parking expansion plans or through provision of dedicated parking spaces at nearby parking ramps. It should be noted that the Modified No-Action Alternative is a short-term measure to mitigate projected loss of market share and maintain current operating levels until a source of funding for expansion is identified and related regional development plans are better developed.

The net annual economic impact comparisons of the building alternatives demonstrate that the estimated public expenditures would achieve the greatest impact on the local economy by the Mohawk site alternative, but at the greatest amount of public investment and greatest amount of on-going public subsidy.

This DEIS also proposes a regional decision-making alternative with respect to planning for a state-of-the-art convention center in Buffalo and western New York. As an alternative course of decision-making, Erie County may decide to involve other agencies and entities involved with regional economic development and marketing (e.g., Erie and Niagara Counties) into the convention center analysis and review process. The intent would be to expand the process outside downtown Buffalo in order to incorporate a regional perspective on siting, designing, constructing, operating, and marketing one or more state-of-the-art convention center facilities to better serve the western New York Region.

Because identification of a regional convention center site or solution is premature pending the coordinated planning efforts of key regional municipalities and agencies, no specific site is identified in this DEIS. If the Lead Agency determines that this course of action is appropriate, additional SEQR documentation may be required at some point in the future when a specific proposal(s) is identified.

Purpose and Need

Section 2 (“Purpose and Need”) and Appendix C of this DEIS present the economics of the proposed project and discuss: a) why there is a need for a new convention center; and b) the short-term and long-term economic impacts of constructing and operating a new convention center.

The DEIS concludes that from 1996 to 2000, there has been a noticeable decline in business activities at the Buffalo Convention Center. The financial records show that the center's overall performance has deteriorated since 1997 because of the lower effective utilization of the facility. The financial burden to the County, in the form of the operational subsidy to the convention center from the County, has continued to increase since 1997. The number of conventions has decreased since 1997, and there are fewer larger conventions, which would tend to attract more out-of-town attendees and produce more revenue for the economy from hotel nights and general eating and drinking revenues. Trade show and meeting attendance increased slightly from 1996 to 2000; however, the attendees at these events are mainly local and do not introduce new spending stimulus to the economy. Therefore, there is a clear need to alter the current downward economic trends for the convention center by replacing or rehabilitating the existing out-of-date facility with a more cost-effective center.

Development costs, including project physical contingencies for the three possible "build" convention center alternatives, are estimated to range between $142 and $168 million (i.e., the Mohawk Site Alternative, the Waterfront Site Alternative, and the Expansion Alternative). The renovation/expansion alternative is the most expensive, while the Waterfront alternative is the least expensive. The updated estimated cost of constructing a 400-room, headquarters-quality hotel is $66.8 million. It should be noted that the construction cost estimates are planning-level estimates designed to present order-of-magnitude costs and to highlight relative differences between alternatives.

Development costs for the Modified No-Action Alternative are estimated at $10 million. The Modified No-Action Alternative would not include the construction of a headquarters-quality hotel.

The economic impacts, which have been updated to reflect influences and assumptions regarding current economic conditions (i.e., recession) and post-September 11, 2001, conditions, are presented in detail with respect to the Mohawk site and are outlined more generally for the Waterfront and Expansion site alternatives.

To gauge the impact of the current recession and September 11 on tourist patronage, the DEIS also reviewed data regarding the hotel market for Erie County. Hotel occupancy in 2001 was consistently below levels experienced in 2000, and a decline in hotel occupancy following the September 11 disaster was clearly evident. The data since September 2001 show that hotel occupancy rates continue to

lag behind previous years that experienced relatively stronger economic growth. While September 11 had immediate effects on hotel occupancy nationally, the disaster ultimately served to exacerbate the existing weak market conditions due to the current economic recession. The effects of September 11 on convention attendance and hotel occupancy are considered to be temporary and are not expected to continue into 2007, when the new facility would be operational, but the effects of the recession are considered in this DEIS.

Section 2 discusses economic trends that support the need for a new or updated facility. From 1996 through 2000, the number of events conducted in the facility has fallen by 10%, while the number of meetings hosted locally has decreased 15%. Over the past year, however, the CVB has had tremendous success in attracting amateur sporting events to the region. This indicates that while the CVB has been successful in attracting certain types of activities to the Buffalo Niagara Region, it has not been able to attract larger conventions and other large events into the existing convention center. It is these events that would bring in out-of-town visitors and have a greater beneficial economic impact on the local economy. This is mainly due to the age and condition of the convention center and the availability of other competing convention and meeting facilities in Erie and Niagara Counties.

It is important to note that the convention center operating revenue has dropped from approximately $1.2 million in 1997 to $790,000 in 2000, while the total operating expenses have fallen slightly, from $1.95 million in 1997 to $1.86 million in 2000. As a result, the ratio of operating revenue to operating expenses (i.e., the operating margin) has fallen from 61.5% in 1997 to 43% in 2000 because of the lower effective utilization of the facility. The convention center has increasingly become a financial burden to the County over the last few years.

However, Appendix C concludes that this burden increases with a proposed new convention center, and that burden increases significantly in excess of any new tax revenues to be realized by the County due to a new convention center.

Appendix C describes in detail the projected economic and fiscal impacts potentially resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed convention center at each alternative site. Appendix C contains the following main subsections:

- Background information regarding the assumptions employed, convention center patronage demand projections, and financial projections for the proposed new convention center;

- The estimated annual recurring economic and fiscal impacts flowing from the operation of the proposed project at each alternative convention center;

- The economic and fiscal impacts of the construction of the convention center at the alternative sites;

- The anticipated economic impacts of constructing a 400-room, headquarters-quality hotel;

- An estimate of foregone economic activity at the Mohawk site (the area containing the potential for the highest concentration of alternative economic activity) that would be precluded by the development of the convention center. These economic impacts then are subtracted from the economic impact estimates from the convention center in order to provide a real or net economic impact estimate; and

- A calculation of the net economic impacts on or benefits to the region associated with the various options. The appendix presents an estimate of the annual public expenditures that would be required to generate the annual incremental economic impacts on or benefits to the region.

Setting and Impacts of the Preferred Alternative

The Mohawk site comprises 55 parcels of land with 46 commercial, retail, and light industrial buildings that range from single-storied structures to multi-storied "vertical blocks." The site is approximately 70% commercial. Of the 46 existing buildings, approximately 30 would have to be demolished to allow for the new convention center.

Older commercial buildings dating from the middle to late 19th Century are located on the west side of Main Street and along the south side of Genesee Street. The northwest quarter of the site contains the largest concentration of buildings, while the remainder of the Mohawk site contains intermittent commercial rows, isolated buildings, and asphalt parking lots. Since 1960, approximately 27 buildings within the limits of the Mohawk site have been demolished.

The site as a whole is zoned both for commercial and industrial use: C3 for CBD use and M1 for light industrial use. Land uses in the immediate vicinity of the preferred project site include a mix of public and privately owned property and are generally consistent with those within the Mohawk site. Principle uses include Catholic Charities, the City of Buffalo Fire Dispatch Center, the University of Buffalo Education Center, various bars, and the Mohawk Parking Ramp, among others.

The NYS Office of Parks and Recreation has determined that the following structures are listed and/or eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places:

- 36 (a.k.a.: 38) Broadway, Buehl Block);
- 321 Ellicott Street, Ferguson Electric Building;
- 465 Washington Street, Sinclair Building;
- 501 Washington Street, George Washington Building/Holling Press Building); and
- 515-517, 523, 525, 529, 535, and 537 Main Street; 11 Genesee Street; Buffalo Urban League Building; and 504 Washington Street are contributing buildings in the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District.

OPRHP has determined that these buildings are important and that, without additional evaluation and extensive mitigation, their loss would be considered significant. Because of the potential for subsurface archaeological resources to be present under certain portions of the site, OPRHP also determined that a Phase 1B archaeological investigation of the Mohawk site is warranted.

Although several of the existing structures at the Mohawk site are vacant and underutilized, the site is characterized by an inventory of unique and diverse urban structures. On-site uses include single-story retail, entertainment, and office building uses as well as multi-story commercial and industrial-type structures, some of which are considered to be architecturally and historically significant. Construction of a convention center and associated 1,250-space parking garage within this project site would result in a loss of diverse urban fabric, replacing it with a single, large, homogeneous use.

Of particular concern regarding the conversion of the Mohawk site from its current uses to the proposed convention center is the "lost opportunity costs" associated with precluding other potential development (i.e., downtown housing) on the site.

It is estimated that at least 70 housing units could be developed on the Mohawk site if the convention center is not constructed at this site. This assumption was based on the R/UDAT recommendations that are consistent with comments received from citizens on the types of development that would be compatible and desired at the Mohawk site if the convention center is not pursued. This EIS examined the number of acres by land use and likely future uses for the parcels at the Mohawk site without a convention center (see Appendix C for more detail). With the hypothetical construction of new residential units and the renovation of older historic units, based on housing construction cost per unit information (R/UDAT 2001) and what is allowable under current zoning regulations, it was determined that approximately 3 acres of new and renovated units (70 units total) could be available. At 100% occupancy, approximately 160 people would occupy the housing units, assuming 2.29 people per household. Short-term economic impacts associated with the construction spending and renovation of these 70 units of residential housing were estimated to create $17.2 in economic output. However, this represents only approximately 8% to 9% of the total short-term economic impacts that could be derived from constructing a new convention center.

Assuming 100% occupancy, household spending of the estimated 160 Mohawk site residents would generate $ 5.2 million in total economic impact and 40 jobs annually across Erie County. As noted, however, these economic impacts cannot be classified as net new or incremental impacts on the county. It should be noted that even if the convention center were built on the Mohawk site, the impacts from lost housing opportunities likely would not be lost to the county. The residents who would generate these economic impacts most likely would still reside in Erie County and/or elsewhere in downtown Buffalo. The impacts could be classified as net new or incremental economic impacts on the region only if each and every household occupying one of the 70 units were to move to the site from outside the Buffalo/Erie MSA. Assuming that the foregone household spending was by residents new to the downtown area from outside Erie County, the net economic impacts from convention center operations spending would be reduced to $60.5 million in total economic output (i.e., $65.7 million minus $5.2 million, as discussed in Appendix C).

The economic output model presented in Appendix C could be scaled up or down to estimate impacts associated with construction of additional units, based on future proposals for residential development.

While no housing units exist on the Mohawk site, the City is promoting housing opportunities on and near the Mohawk site consistent with the recommendations of the American Institute of Architects Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT), which met in March 2001.

Recent planning initiatives commissioned by the City of Buffalo, including the Downtown Strategic Plan, Downtown 2002!, Buffalo Niagara Now, and the City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, as well as non-commissioned studies such as the R/UDAT study, have addressed the issue of encouraging more people to live in downtown Buffalo as a means to realize the revitalization of the CBD. The focus of many of these studies has been on developing strategies to encourage a mixed-use downtown with reuse of the city's inventory of architecturally and historically significant buildings and neighborhoods for urban housing.

The area bounding the Mohawk site is one location that has been identified as potentially having buildings suitable for reuse as housing.

In the last several years, the City of Buffalo and agencies serving the downtown area have demonstrated a commitment to developing downtown housing. Short-term and long-term strategies are identified in the Downtown Strategic Plan and in Downtown 2002! and generally are described more in the Draft Comprehensive Plan and in various studies such as the R/UDAT study.

It is estimated that the market can absorb more than 300 new housing units per year for the next five years (R/UDAT 2001). It should be noted that 300 units of housing per year could be accommodated in downtown Buffalo even if the convention center were built on the Mohawk site. However, what would be lost are the diverse and unique buildings and architecture that could be converted to housing stock, which currently are located on the Mohawk site.

While construction of a convention center on the Mohawk site would preclude the potential for future residential development on 11.5 acres of land, it should be noted that the site is zoned for M3

and C3 uses. While not zoned specifically for residential development, residential units would not be precluded.

Construction of a convention center and associated facilities at the Mohawk site would result in beneficial impacts on land uses along Main Street on the west side of the site. The construction would result in the redevelopment of Main Street buildings that are vacant or underutilized, which potentially would have an overall positive impact on the land use character of the street and the downtown pedestrian mall.

Potential conflicts may result at the Mohawk site with respect to pedestrian access to downtown from residential areas approximately 0.8 mile to the east. Existing land use and traffic patterns characterizing the Elm/Oak corridor east of the Mohawk site already provide a real and perceived barrier between the residential areas to the east and the downtown area to the west. The Elm/Oak corridor does not provide for a continuous and natural pedestrian flow to and from downtown from east-side residential neighborhoods. Placement of an additional 400,000-square-foot convention center structure and hotel in this area would increase this perception and may further discourage the connection of east-side residential neighborhoods to this portion of downtown Buffalo. However, if designed appropriately (i.e., incorporates pedestrian-friendly linkages, street-level commercial and retail uses, effective visual links to Main Street, appropriate landscaping, non-homogeneous facade treatments, and improvements to radial roadway linkages), important linkages could be enhanced and these perceived impacts would be minimized.

The Mohawk site is located in the Central Planning Community, which had an estimated population of 6,485 in 2000. Population projections for the Central Planning Community show a growing population over the next 10 years to 20 years. This anticipated growth is expected mainly because of aggressive downtown housing initiatives and specific projections for 1,500 additional dwelling units to be created within the Central Planning Community by 2010.

Current estimates are that 659 people work in businesses located on the Mohawk site, with a total estimated payroll of $18,507,294. The Mohawk site generates approximately $387,665 of tax revenue for the City of Buffalo and Erie County. According to City officials, an additional $6,865 in garbage taxes was collected in 2000, and $11,600 in sewer rent was collected in 1999. Construction of a new convention center on the Mohawk site would result in minor

adverse impacts on taxes and revenues to the City of Buffalo and Erie County. The City would see a net loss of $328,118 (approximately 0.24%) in real property tax revenue, and the County would lose $54,547 (approximately 0.03%).

The revised estimates assume that the design and construction of the new convention center will take 3 years and employ 1,784 people in Erie County and provide 1,844 jobs statewide over that period. Construction of the new convention center will have an estimated countywide non-recurring economic impact between $193 and $217 million and a statewide economic impact between $200 and $225 million, depending on the alternative chosen. The construction of a new convention center is expected to generate between $58 and $65 million in wages countywide and between $65 and $73 million in employee compensation statewide. Construction of the hotel will generate a non-recurring annual total of 788 short-term jobs and $85.4 million in total economic impact countywide.

For 2007, the long-term employment impacts of center operations under the Mohawk alternative on the county level are 845 additional jobs with associated earnings of $22.4 million dollars. New York State is expected to gain 857 new jobs with $22.9 million in employee compensation (see Appendix C, Tables C-7 and C-8).

The impact of construction on downtown business activity is expected to be minor and last for the duration of 3 years of construction only. While it is likely that Ellicott Street would be closed for significant time periods because of construction of the facility above the street level, most disruptions due to construction are likely to occur from delivery of supplies during business hours, which would result in temporary delays and traffic disruptions. Scheduling delivery times to avoid peak morning and afternoon travel times will mitigate this impact.

Construction and operation of the convention center at the Mohawk site will not result in significant impacts on the provision of emergency services (e.g., fire, police, and hospitals) in downtown Buffalo. In addition, the delivery of water, wastewater, electrical service, gas, and solid waste removal services will not be affected by construction and operation of the convention center at the Mohawk site.

Noise will be generated during demolition and construction activities; however, this will be intermittent and short-term in duration, and will occur during the day when sensitivity to noise levels is the

lowest. Although some additional traffic will result from operation of the convention center, this will not result in a significant increase in noise levels over current levels.

No known contamination exists within the Mohawk site, but according to a review of historical records, maps, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, databases, and past and current business types and manufacturing activities, several of the properties likely may exhibit some levels of contamination due to past or current use, storage or generation of hazardous materials, or other activities typically associated with urban site contamination (e.g., dry cleaning, printing, solvents, and USTs).

The intersections selected for traffic study are operating at an acceptable LOS. Furthermore, with the presence of a new or expanded convention center, the intersections still will operate within acceptable limits. Therefore, it was concluded that the impact of additional traffic was minimal regardless of which site was considered. Additional parking is required regardless of which site is considered. It appears that using a conservative but reasonable estimate for future parking needs, the currently proposed 1,250-space parking facility may not be adequate for the worst-case event at a new convention center and simultaneous events in the Theater District, Dunn Tire Park, and other local venues. A final detailed analysis of site-specific design issues for the selected facility, along with the marketing needs of the new or expanded convention center, will determine the ultimate size of the on-site parking structure.

Although there is no restriction on truck movements in downtown Buffalo, truck access to the loading/unloading docks at a new convention center is critically important to is the center's efficient function. The Mohawk site has limitations for truck access because of street configuration, current one-way traffic flow patterns, and turning radii from Oak Street onto Huron Street. These design challenges can be addressed during final design.

Comparative Analysis of Alternatives

Table 1 presents a comparison of each of the alternatives to the existing baseline level (2000) in terms of attendance, economic, and fiscal impacts. This table is intended to present this information in a format for ease of comparison by the Lead Agency; it is not intended to present a conclusion or make a recommendation. The information presented in Table 1 is based on data provided by various sources and modeling results, as discussed in more detail in Appendix C of this Draft EIS.

Table 1 Comparative Evaluation of Convention Center Alternatives, 2007 Projections

	Baseline (2000)	Alternatives				
		No Action	Modified No Action	Mohawk Site	Waterfront Site	Expansion
Attendance						
Total Attendance	420,159	315,178	375,338	446,327	431,728	384,655
Out-of-Town Attendees	41,667	31,385	37,376	58,023	42,991	38,303
Total Events	229	176	209	250	241	215
Estimated Total Costs						
Estimated Cost of Convention Center	N/A	0	$10M	$166.5M	$142.4M	$168.2M
Estimated Cost of Hotel	N/A	0	0	$66.8M	$66.8M	$66.8M
Total Estimated Cost	N/A	0	$10M	$233.3M	$209.2M	$235.0M
Estimated Economic/Fiscal Impacts (annual recurring impact of operations)						
Total Employment	583	456	545	845	626	558
Total Employee Compensation	$15.5M	$12.1M	$14.4M	$22.4M	$16.6M	$14.8M
Total Economic Impact	$45.0M	$35.5M	$42.3M	$65.7M	$48.7M	$43.4M
Net Economic Impact/Jobs Created Statewide	N/A	N/A	N/A	$54,259	$47,956	$40,989
Annual Fiscal Impact/Tax Revenue	$3.38M	$2.66M	$3.17M	$4.92M	$3.65M	$3.25M
Estimated Spending on Hotel Accommodations (by out-of-town attendees)	$10.9M	$9.8M	$11.7M	$18.1M	$13.4M	$11.9M
Estimated Hotel Tax Revenue (6%) (from out-of-town attendees)	$0.65M	$0.59M	$0.70M	$1.0M	$0.80M	$0.71M
Estimated Operational Revenue/Expenses						
Annual Operating Revenue	$0.79M	$0.77M	$1.18M	$4.05M	$3.93M	$3.59M
Annual Operating Expenses	$1.86M	$2.29M	$2.68M	$6.78M	$6.67M	$6.35M
Annual Net Operating revenue	($1.07M)	($1.52M)	($1.50M)	($2.73M)	($2.74M)	($2.76M)
Operational Subsidy (per occupied square foot)	$0.14	$0.22	$0.17	$0.12	$0.13	$0.14

The No-Action and Modified No-Action alternatives would result in no significant or adverse environmental impacts.

Project Schedule and Funding

The construction and operation of the new Buffalo Convention Center will involve several phases, including preconstruction planning, preliminary and final design, site acquisition, demolition, site preparation, and construction.

Perhaps the most significant variable in determining the actual schedule for construction and operation will be identifying the sources and availability of funding. Erie County cannot cover a significant portion of the public cost of the project, which is between $173.1 and $198.9 million. This cost includes estimated public funding requirements for the convention center, a 400-room hotel, and a 1,250-space parking garage. Other sources of funding, such as state, local, and private sources, will be critical to completion of this project. At this time, definite funding sources have not been identified and a commitment of funding from any specific source(s) has not been secured.

Assuming that funding sources can be identified, an aggressive schedule would have the proposed new convention center operational by 2007. This is contingent on the planning, site selection, and final design being completed by early 2004. If construction is delayed, it should be noted that impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed convention center likewise will be delayed. Because impacts from construction are proportional to the given amount of spending in a given year, whenever that spending does occur, the impacts result as well.

Given the fiscal and political realities facing Erie County and the State of New York, however, it is unlikely that funding for any of the new construction alternatives will be available for this or other major development projects within the next three or four years, thus delaying any final design and construction by at least that amount of time. Unless there is a significant change in the State's budget or new sources of revenue are developed, it is unlikely funding for the proposed action will be available, therefore indefinitely delaying construction.

Adverse impacts to business activity and development in and around the Mohawk site likely would result from a significant delay in the schedule and the uncertainty associated with an extended planning and construction period. This type of uncertainty and delayed decision-making would limit the interest that developers

may have in committing to other development projects (i.e., housing), would limit a landowner's or business' interest in investing/improving its building or operations, and would affect the availability of funding for project-specific development or improvement projects. It is unlikely that developers will undertake a project in this area until they are certain whether the proposed convention center will be located at this site.

Delays and uncertainty associated with extended planning and decision-making would affect short-term private business activity and investment at each identified alternative, except the No-Action and the Modified No-Action Alternatives (see below). Delays in decision-making regarding the No-Action and Modified No-Action Alternatives potentially would limit the ability of the CVB to attract/confirm larger meetings and conventions, which require advanced confirmation periods, to the existing convention center. However, the CVB has not been able to attract many of these larger conventions and meetings to the existing convention center, mainly because of the condition of the facility.

Alternative Uses of Funding

Many comments were received from the public questioning the wisdom of incurring the costs to construct a new convention center, headquarters hotel, and parking structure currently estimated to cost between $173.1 and $198.9 million in public funds. Comments relate to the expense of other uses of the funds to promote economic development, small business assistance, downtown housing, and other uses.

Identifying, evaluating, and comparing hypothetical alternatives to invest and use any funds available in the future and the resultant beneficial impacts would be virtually unlimited. While other ways to use these as yet unavailable funds could result in other beneficial economic impacts equal to or possibly greater than a convention center, it is difficult to assess the availability of funding for hypothetical alternatives.

Potential Reuse Alternatives

Assuming that a new convention center is built at another location in downtown Buffalo, the existing convention center would need to be redeveloped. This DEIS identifies and evaluates several potential "re-uses," including single- and multi-tenant retail, mixed-use office space, a casino, an athletic facility(ies), public school/administration support, a library, or office space to house consolidated County office functions currently located in leased space.

It is possible, given the type and extent of reuse or the role and responsibilities of a lead agency, that supplemental SEQR documentation may be necessary. It would be the responsibility of this as yet undetermined agency to comply with SEQR. As such, it is both premature and inappropriate for Erie County to conduct detailed SEQR analysis at this time.

Demolition

In response to public comments, the demolition of the existing convention center structure also is addressed. This could result in the provision of public open space and/or urban park for downtown workers and residents. In addition, it allows for reopening a portion of Genesee Street to re-establish Joseph Ellicotts' radial street plan for downtown Buffalo. Encouraging reinforcement of the radial street pattern was recommended by the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT).

Summary of Public and Agency Involvement

Included in this DEIS as Appendix A is a summary of the Scoping and Public Involvement Program. Appendix A includes the public notices, the scoping agenda, background information, various documentation from the Public Scoping Meeting, and all comments received.

The comments that were received were both supportive of and critical of a new convention center. Comments indicated preference for the Mohawk Site, the Waterfront site, expanding the existing Center, and the suggestion to "do nothing." Many questioned the wisdom of doing the project at all while others demanded that they project be built immediately. Many argued against a "silver bullet" and advocated using the money to encourage and support residential and smaller-scale economic development initiatives. Others argued that a regional perspective must be taken and evaluate the potential of developing a new convention center facility in Niagara Falls and enhancing the facility in Buffalo without expanding it.

The main issues of concern presented at the scoping meeting and in written comments included the following items:

- Purpose and need for a new convention center;
- Suitability of the various alternatives;

- Impact on existing structures and lost opportunity costs (e.g., residential development and small businesses) at the Mohawk Site;

- Impacts on the City's urban fabric, neighborhood character, pedestrian activity, and loss of diversity within/near a site;

- Projected vs. actual economic impact, taking into account the loss of existing economic activity generated on the Mohawk Site;

- Implications of the recent R/UDAT findings and conclusions;

- Traffic impacts;

- Broad support for incorporating "Green Design" principles and practices in any alternative; and

- Project costs and benefits.

Matters to Be Decided

The first and most important matter that needs to be decided by the Lead Agency is whether the economic benefits due to increased convention business (i.e., due to out-of-town visitors) warrants the expenditure of between $173.1 and $198.9 million of public funds.

Implementing design guidelines for a newly constructed structure or for renovating the existing center, and County acquisition of properties from public and private entities, will require certain reviews, approvals, and permits from various City, County, State, and federal agencies. Table 1-2 of the DEIS lists these permits and approvals and the authorizing agency for each.

Sources of funding also would have to be secured before final design and construction of a new convention center, including hotel and parking garage, could begin.

To address the issues associated with the buildings listed and eligible for the National and State Registers of Historic Places, additional Phase 1B evaluations would have to be conducted and each structure would have to be evaluated in detail to determine appropriate mitigation. The scope of these additional studies would have to be determined. The pursuit of either the No-Action Alternative or Modified No-Action Alternative would avoid this issue because no potentially significant historic or archaeological resources or structures would be affected.

1 Description of the Proposed Action

Erie County owns and operates the existing Buffalo Convention Center located in downtown Buffalo on Franklin Street between Court and Mohawk Streets. The existing center, constructed in 1978, is a 180,000 square foot, two-story building with a 63,000-square foot main exhibition floor on the upper level. There is no on-site parking at the existing center and the closest hotel is the 400-room Hyatt Regency, which is linked directly to the convention center by a second floor-level pedestrian bridge.

In its current condition, this facility has been determined by the County and the Buffalo-Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to be out-dated, obsolete, and non-competitive with other peer cites in competing to attract out-of-town conventions. It has also been losing its share of regional trade shows, meetings, and other events to other local venues due to factors such as parking, and condition of facilities.

1.1 Introduction

Erie County proposes to construct a new 400,000 to 425,000 gross square foot convention center with a 125,000-square foot main exhibit hall in downtown Buffalo, New York. Also included in proposed action is the evaluation of the potential to accommodate a headquarters-quality hotel within or adjacent to the selected project site as well as construction of a minimum 1,250-space parking facility.

For the purposes of this EIS, the preferred site for construction of a new Buffalo Convention Center is the Mohawk site. The Mohawk site is an 11-acre site bounded by Main Street on the west, Broadway on the south, Huron Street on the North, and Oak Street on the east. Figure 1-1 shows the project location in relation to the City of Buffalo and Erie County.

02:001288_EC02_02-B0724
Fig1-1.CDR-8/21/01-GRA

SOURCE: National Geographic Road Atlas,GeoSystems 1999.

SCALE
0 2 4 Miles

Figure 1-1 SITE LOCATION MAP
NEW BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER

Development of the project would involve an estimated State and County expenditure of between $173.1 and $198.9 million depending on the alternative chosen. This is based on the convention center cost and the public funding portion of the hotel. Major costs associated with this project include site preparation (land acquisition and relocation, site clearing and demolition, infrastructure placement) and construction of the Convention Center, parking garage, and hotel. An estimated increase of between 1,648 and 1,854 part- and full-time jobs are projected to be created as a result of this action as well as indirect job creation in hotel, restaurant, retail, and tourist-service sectors. These jobs are just generated by construction and will be short-term in nature.

As addressed in this EIS, both positive and adverse impacts would result from construction and operation of a Convention Center at the Mohawk site.

Through this DEIS, the County is also considering other alternatives to the Mohawk site, including the Waterfront site, expansion of the existing Convention Center facility, other sites identified during Scoping, the No-Action Alternative, and the Modified No-Action Alternative. The No-Action Alternative involves keeping the facility in its current condition and making no significant changes or improvements to it, in order to make it more competitive. The Modified No-Action Alternative involves making major renovations and improvements to the existing facility in order to minimize the projected decline in facility usage, total attendance, and resulting economic impacts on the region.

In addition, alternatives involving facility size, use of available funds, and potential re-uses of the existing Convention Center are discussed.

This DEIS also proposes a regional decision-making alternative with respect to planning for a state-of-the-art Convention Center in Buffalo and western New York. Because identification of a regional convention center site or solution is premature pending the coordinated planning efforts of key regional municipalities and agencies, no specific site is identified in this DEIS. If the Lead Agency determines that this course of action is appropriate, additional SEQR documentation may be required at some point in the future when a specific proposal(s) is identified.

In any decision-making by the Lead Agency, it is critical that the County take into account lessons learned from other peer cities, and learn from other similar regions with dual urban centers.

1.2 Project Description

As noted in the Positive Declaration and Notice of Intent To Prepare a Draft EIS, dated April 25, 2000, (see Appendix A), the proposed action to be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement for the New Buffalo Convention Center includes the following major elements:

- Construction of a new 400,000 to 425,000-gross square foot convention center with a 125,000-square foot main exhibit hall on an 11-acre site in downtown Buffalo, New York. The site is generally bounded by Main Street to the west, Huron Street to the north, Oak Street to the east, and Broadway to the south.

- Evaluation of the potential to accommodate a headquarters-quality hotel within or adjacent to the selected project site as well as construction of a minimum 1,250-space parking facility.

1.3 Project Location and Setting

All identified sites are located in the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York. Buffalo is located in the western portion of New York State and remains Erie County's largest and New York State's second largest city (see Figure 1-1).

Mohawk Site

The preferred location for the new Buffalo Convention Center is the Mohawk site (see Figure 1-2), which includes an approximately 11.2-acre project area that is bounded by Main Street on the west, Broadway on the south, Huron Street on the North, and Oak Street on the east. The Mohawk site comprises 55 parcels of land with 46 commercial, retail, and light industrial buildings that range from single-storied structures to multi-storied "vertical blocks" (PanAmerican Consultants, Inc., 2001).

Older commercial buildings dating from the middle to late 19th Century are located on the west side of Main Street and along the south side of Genesee Street. The northwest quarter of the site contains the largest concentration of buildings, and the remainder of the Mohawk site contains intermittent commercial rows, isolated buildings, and asphalt parking lots. Since 1960, approximately 27 buildings within the limits of the Mohawk site have been demolished (PanAmerican Consultants, Inc., 2001).

02:001288_EC02_02-B0724
Fig1-2.CDR-2/5/02-GRA

SOURCE: Erie County Property Assessor File, May 2000

SCALE
0 100 200 Feet

Figure 1-2 NEW BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER EIS MOHAWK SITE

The site as a whole is zoned both for commercial and industrial use: C3 for CBD use and M1 for light industrial use (see Section 4.1.4, Current Zoning). Land uses in the immediate vicinity of the preferred project site include a mix of publicly and privately owned property. Principal uses include Catholic Charities, the City of Buffalo Fire Dispatch Center, the University of Buffalo Education Center, various bars, and the Mohawk Parking Ramp, among others (see Section 4.1, Land Use).

Based on previous studies conducted by Erie County and the CVB, the Mohawk site was identified as the preferred site location due to its proximity to the city's CBD and major transportation routes, and its easy pedestrian access to an existing hotel, the City's entertainment and theatre districts, and other cultural amenities.

Waterfront Site

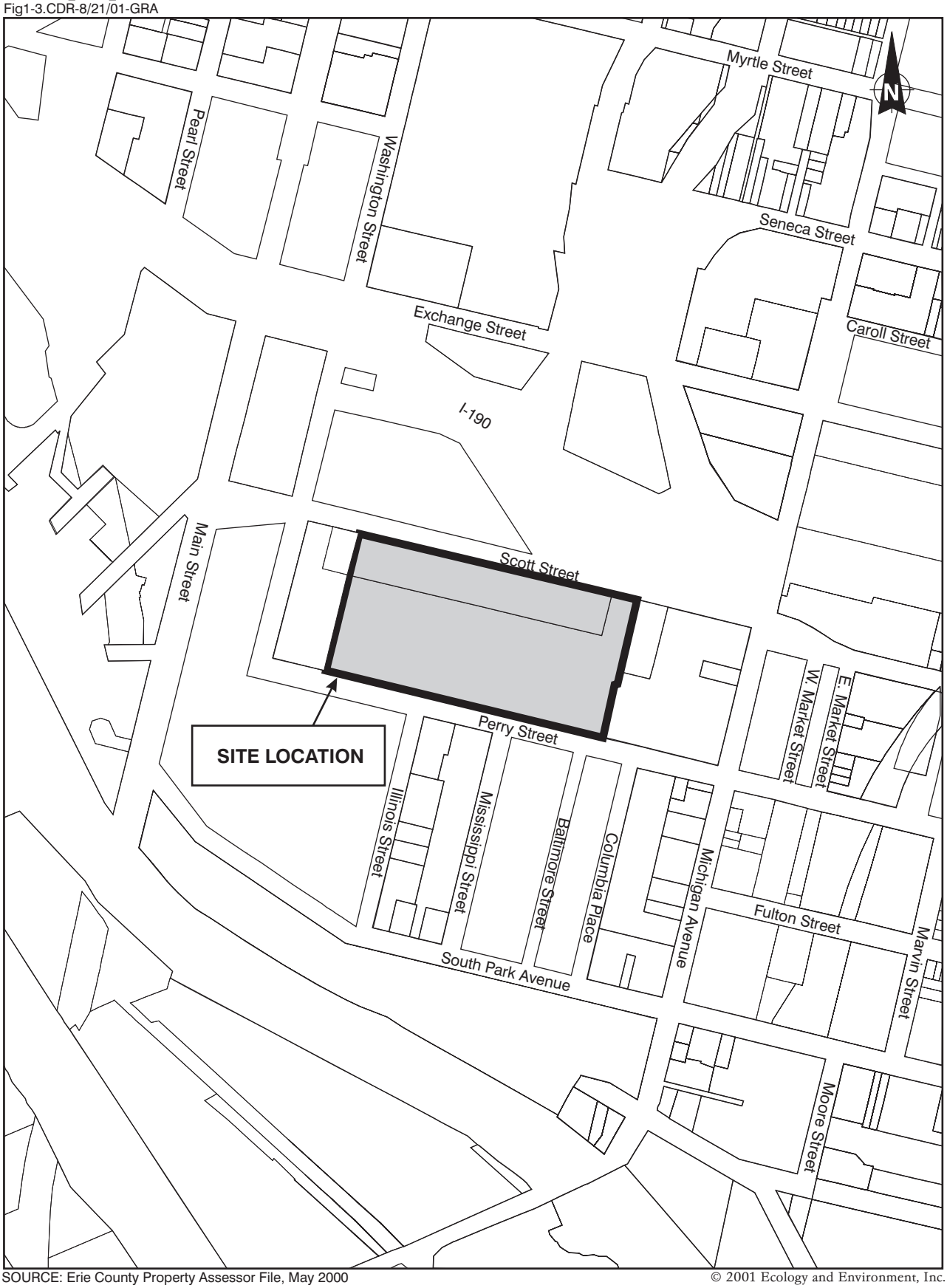
The Waterfront site is a 10.4-acre site in the southern portion of downtown. Bounded by the HSBC Atrium (west), Perry Street (south), Scott Street (north), and Mississippi Street ROW (east), the site is currently used as 24-hour parking for HSBC employees and for parking for delivery vehicles for the Buffalo News. There are no existing structures on the site (see Figure 1-3).

Adjacent land uses include a developed area to the south (including the HSBC Arena and Parking Garage and other structures in the Cobblestone District). Vacant and industrial land uses are located to the east, and the Buffalo News and Interstate 190 are located to the north. To the west beyond the HSBC Atrium building is the Webster Block, a current parking lot proposed for redevelopment as the 20- to 30-story Adelphia building.

Expansion of Existing Facility

The Existing Convention Center project site is approximately 5 acres in size and encompasses the existing center and properties to the east across Pearl Street (see Figure 1-4). In addition to the existing Convention Center facility, the site for proposed expansion extends across Pearl Street to Main Street and would include a mix of vacant and occupied commercial structures from 450 Main Street (a Rite Aid Pharmacy) north to Mohawk Street (including 456, 460, 472-474, and 478 Main Street). The seven existing structures on site are a mix of commercial, office, and vacant uses ranging from two to six stories.

02:001288_EC02_02-B0724
Fig1-3.CDR-8/21/01-GRA



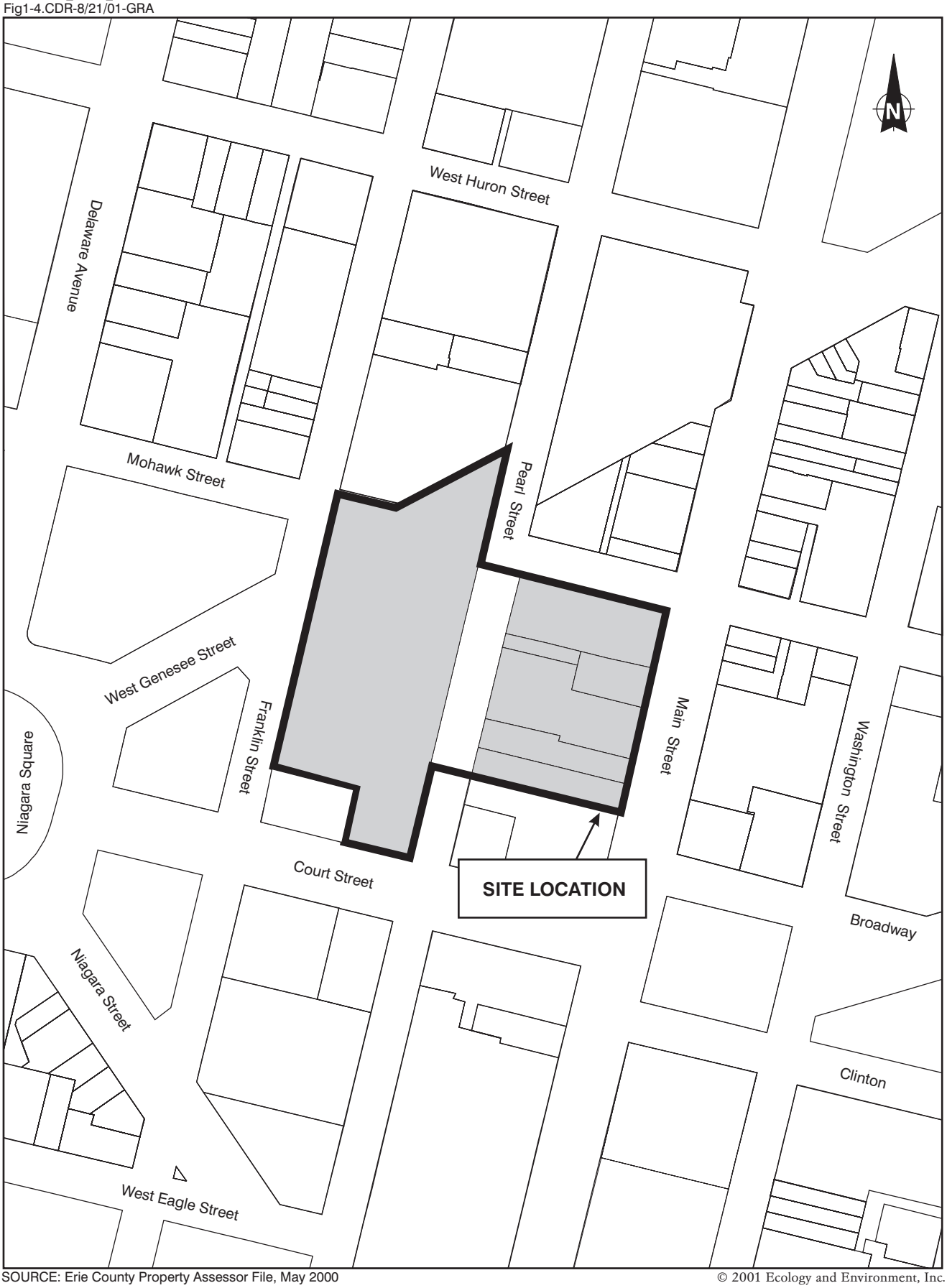
SOURCE: Erie County Property Assessor File, May 2000

SCALE

0 200 400 Feet

Figure 1-3 NEW BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER EIS WATERFRONT SITE

02:001288_EC02_02-B0724
Fig1-4.CDR-8/21/01-GRA



SOURCE: Erie County Property Assessor File, May 2000

SCALE
0 100 200 Feet

Figure 1-4 NEW BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER EIS
EXISTING CONVENTION CENTER SITE

1.4 SEQR Process

This document has been prepared in accordance with state environmental quality review (SEQR) requirements, established by Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) and implemented by the New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR), 6 NYCRR Part 617.

The SEQR process considers environmental factors in the early planning stages of actions that are directly undertaken, funded, or approved by local, regional, and state agencies. SEQR requires a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to environmental review to allow for possible modifications to the proposed action to avoid impacts on the environment. Coordination and review of the SEQR process is the responsibility of the lead agency, which is the governmental entity directly responsible for the implementation, permitting, and/or funding of the proposed project.

The primary tool of the SEQR process is the EIS. If it is determined that a proposed action may have a significant impact on the environment, an EIS is prepared to explore ways to mitigate environmental impacts or to identify and review more acceptable alternatives.

On April 25, 2000, Erie County was designated lead agency for the project and has authorized the preparation of this DEIS. The County issued a Positive Declaration and Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a EIS on April 25, 2000.

1.5 Project Schedule and Funding

The construction and operation of a new Buffalo Convention Center will involve several phases, including preconstruction planning, preliminary and final design, site acquisition, demolition, site preparation, and construction. Perhaps the most significant variable in determining the actual schedule for construction and operation will be identifying the sources and availability of funding. Erie County cannot cover a significant portion of the entire cost of the project, now estimated at $235 million (including the convention center, a 400-room hotel, and a 1,250-space parking garage), or between $173.1 and $198.9 million assuming that the costs associated with construction of a headquarters hotel were shared by private developers. Other sources of funding, such as state, local, and private sources, will be critical to completion of this project.

At this time, definite funding sources have not been identified and a commitment of funding from any specific source(s) has not been

secured. Given the fiscal and political realities facing Erie County and the State of New York, however, it is very unlikely that funding will be available for this project within the next three to four years, thus delaying any potential for final design and construction until that time. Unless there is a significant change in the State's budget (which has a projected deficit of $1.1 billion for Fiscal Year 2001/2002 and $5.5 billion for Fiscal Year 2002/2003) or development of new sources of revenue (e.g., casino), the potential for project funding unlikely will be available, therefore indefinitely delaying construction.

If it is assumed that, notwithstanding the current fiscal outlook, funding sources can be identified within the next two years and that construction of the facility is a local and state priority, an aggressive schedule would have the proposed new convention center operational by 2007. This is contingent on the planning, site selection, and final design being completed by early 2004.

It is projected that design and construction of the new convention center will take 3 years. For a given year, the number of generated jobs is expected to be approximately proportional to the following construction spending-disbursement schedule, as shown in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1 Construction Spending-Disbursement Schedule

Year	Percent of Construction Spending
2004	6.0
2005	49.0
2006	43.7
2007	1.3
Total	**100**

Under this scenario, the existing convention center would have to remain operational at least until 2007. It is anticipated that the decline in usage (i.e., events and attendance) of the existing facility, as addressed in Section 2 ("Purpose and Need") of this DEIS, would continue. Additional capital expenditures and increasing County subsidies would be needed annually to keep the facility operational until a new convention center is ready for use.

If construction is delayed, it should be noted that impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed convention center likewise will be delayed. Because impacts from construction are proportional to the given amount of spending in a given

year, whenever that spending does occur, the impacts result as well.

Adverse impacts to business activity and development in and around the Mohawk site would result from a significant delay in the schedule and the uncertainty associated with an extended planning and construction period. This type of uncertainty and delayed decision-making would limit the interest that developers may have in committing to other development projects (i.e., housing), would limit landowners' interest in investing/improving their building or operations, and would affect the availability of funding for project-specific development or improvement projects. Developers unlikely will undertake a project in this area until they are certain whether the proposed convention center will be located at this site.

Delays and uncertainty associated with extended planning and decision-making would affect short-term private business activity and investment at each identified alternative, except the No-Action and Modified No-Action Alternatives (see below). Delays in decision-making regarding the No-Action and Modified No-Action Alternatives potentially would limit the ability of the CVB to attract/confirm larger meetings and conventions, which require advanced confirmation periods. However, the CVB has not been able to attract many of these larger conventions and meetings to the existing convention center mainly because of the condition of the facility.

1.6 Permits and Approvals

Implementing design guidelines for a newly constructed structure or renovating the existing center, and County acquisition of properties from public and private entities will require certain reviews, approvals, and permits from various city, county, state, and federal agencies. Table 1-2 lists these permits and approvals and the authorizing agency for each.

Table 1-2 Agencies and Permits/Approvals

Agency	Permit/Approval
City of Buffalo	
City of Buffalo Planning Board	■ Advisory Review of DEIS
Department of Permit and Inspection Services	■ Issuance of building permits ■ Issuance of certificate of occupancy
Department of Public Works	■ Street Design and Planning ■ Water connection
Buffalo Sewer Authority	■ Connections to Existing and potential new infrastructure

Table 1-2 Agencies and Permits/Approvals

Agency	Permit/Approval
Office of Strategic Planning	■ Advisory Role
County of Erie	
Legislature	■ Approval of county funding arrangements
Department of Environment and Planning	■ SEQR Lead Agency DEIS
Division of Sewage Management and Division of Water Authority	■ Approval of connections to existing infrastructure
New York State	
Legislature	■ Approval of state funding arrangements
Governor's Office of Regulatory Affairs	■ Advisory role
Department of Environmental Conservation	■ Review of site sewer plans ■ Issuance of applicable environmental permits
Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation	■ NHPA Section 106 and 14.09 review; effects on cultural resources
Natural Heritage Program	■ Threatened/Endangered Species Consultation
Federal	
Department of Interior	■ Joint Application (See State OPRHP)

1.7 Summary of Alternatives

Pursuant to SEQR, a description and analysis of a range of alternatives are required to ensure the selection of a preferred site that best meets the project objectives and that represents the most feasible option based on environmental, social, and economic considerations. The identification and analysis of alternatives is integral to the overall process of selecting the site for a new Convention Center.

Alternative Site Locations

The diverse studies and analyses described above enabled the County, in conjunction with the City and other agencies, to formulate and identify a preferred site location for new convention center. In addition, however, this process also allowed for the identification of alternative site locations.

This draft EIS analyzes various project alternatives that were identified during previous studies. As with the preferred site location, these alternatives are considered from environmental, social, and economic perspectives. In addition, new alternatives are evaluated that were identified through consultation with county and city government officials and members of the public during scoping and the preparation of the draft EIS.

The alternatives identified for the proposed new Buffalo Convention Center include the following:

- **Construction of a new Convention Center at the Waterfront site.** The Waterfront site is a 10.4-acre site in the southern portion of downtown. Bounded by the HSBC Atrium (west), Perry Street (south), Scott Street (north), and Mississippi Street ROW (east).

- **Expansion of Existing Convention Center.** The Existing Convention Center project site is approximately 5 acres in size, encompassing the existing center and seven existing commercial structures to the east across Pearl Street. These properties would include a mix of vacant and occupied commercial structures from 450 Main Street (a Rite Aid Pharmacy) north to Mohawk Street (including 456, 460, 472-474, and 478 Main Street).

The following alternative sites were identified during scoping and are addressed in greater detail in Section 3 ("Analysis of Alternatives") of this DEIS:

- **Niagara Street Alternative**. The triangular site bounded by Niagara Street, Huron Street, and Elmwood Avenue;

- **Theater District Alternative Site**. The site bounded by West Tupper, West Chippewa, Pearl, and Franklin Streets;

- **Oak Street Site.** The site bounded by Clinton, Elm, North Division, and Ellicott Streets; and

- **St Michael's Site.** The City of Buffalo has completed a feasibility study for the redevelopment of downtown Buffalo. This study proposed several conceptual downtown redevelopment projects including a casino, a new convention center, the waterfront, the old Memorial Auditorium, and other developments.

  In particular, this study identified a new site for the location of a potential new convention center. This site is located north of the Mohawk site and north of Genesee Street. The site is bounded by Genesee Street, Elm Street, and Washington Street, and would extend the facility over Oak Street and Ellicott Street.

Each site is addressed in more detail in Section 3 of this DEIS, and subsequently has been dismissed as a viable alternative for the reasons stated in Section 3.

No-Action Alternatives

Pursuant to the SEQR, this DEIS must consider the No-Action Alternative. In this case, the No-Action Alternative involves keeping the convention center in its current facility and location, and not constructing a new convention center, headquarters hotel, or parking garage. The Modified No-Action Alternative involves implementing strategic capital investments and improvements into the existing convention center in order to make the facility more competitive and to minimize the projected decline in facility usage.

- **No-Action Alternative.** Under the no-action alternative, the expansion of the existing Buffalo Convention Center and the construction of a new convention would be precluded. Although expansion of the facility is not included in this alternative, certain cosmetic and operating improvements would be required annually and increased public sector subsidies would be necessary on a regular basis in order to keep the facility marginally competitive with other local meeting and convention facilities;

- **Modified No-Action Alternative.** The Modified No-Action Alternative is similar to the No-Action Alternative in that no new facility or expansion is proposed. However, the modified approach includes making more immediate, modest renovations and improvements to the existing facility (currently estimated at $10 million by the Erie County Department of Public Works) in order to maintain current market share and to minimize the projected decline in facility usage, total attendance, and resulting economic impacts to the region. The most important improvement, in addition to cosmetic and technological improvements, would be to make approximately 300 dedicated parking spaces available very close to the existing convention center. This can be achieved through the City's current parking expansion plans.

  The Modified No-Action Alternative is seen as a short-term solution to offsetting declining usage of the existing convention center and stabilizing facility usage and attendance without building a new convention center facility at this time.

  While the Modified No-Action Alternative will result in greater beneficial economic impacts than the projections for the current

facility under the No-Action Alternative but less than the projections for a new convention center, the Modified No-Action Alternative would not result in the long-term positive economic benefits that would be attributable to the development of a new, expanded, state-of-the-art convention center.

The Modified No-Action Alternative will result in no significant adverse environmental impacts.

Alternative Convention Center Size

Based on prior market studies and feasibility studies, the proposed facility size and requirements are as identified in Sections 1.1 and 1.3 of this DEIS. Based on the findings and conclusions of this DEIS, the Lead Agency may decide to evaluate the feasibility, viability, and cost of a smaller convention center facility. If this course of action is determined acceptable, a new market study, economic feasibility analysis, and possibly an updated siting study will need to be conducted.

Alternative Uses of Funding

Many comments were received from the public questioning the wisdom of incurring the costs to construct a new convention center, headquarters hotel, and parking structure (currently estimated at a cost of $235 million, or approximately $173.1 to $198.9 million, netting out private funding for the hotel at the expense of other uses of the funds to promote economic development, small business assistance, downtown housing, and other uses.

Identifying, evaluating, and comparing hypothetical alternative ways to invest and use future, as yet unavailable funds and the resultant beneficial impacts would be virtually unlimited. While other ways to use these future available funds could result in other beneficial economic impacts equal to or possibly greater than those of a convention center, it is difficult to assess the availability of funding for hypothetical alternatives.

Potential Reuse Alternatives

Assuming that a new convention center is built at another location in downtown Buffalo, the existing Convention Center would need to be redeveloped. This DEIS identifies and evaluates several potential re-uses, including single- and multi-tenant retail, mixed-use office space, a casino, an athletic facility(ies), public school/administration support, a library, or office space to house consolidated County office functions currently located in leased space.

Impacts associated with these potential reuses are addressed qualitatively due to the lack of sufficient data and information to accurately quantify and project specific impacts, including design, cost, schedule, and need.

It is possible, given the type and extent of reuse or the role and responsibilities of a lead agency, that supplemental SEQR documentation may be necessary. For example, if the State of New York and the Seneca Nation of Indians develop a specific proposal to construct and operate a casino at the existing convention center site, the lead agency would not be Erie County (as is the case with the convention center), but would rather be a state agency or the City of Buffalo. It would be the responsibility of this as yet undetermined agency to comply with SEQR. As such, it is both premature and inappropriate for Erie County to conduct detailed SEQR analysis at this time.

Similarly, if the Buffalo School Board and/or the Joint School Reconstruction Board find that this site is suitable for redevelopment as a school or school-related administration facility, the appropriate Board would be responsible for complying with SEQR to the extent that it coincides with other related actions found to be subject to SEQR.

Demolition

In response to public comments, the demolition of the existing convention center structure also is addressed. This could result in the provision of public open space and/or urban park for downtown workers and residents. In addition, it allows for potentially reopening a portion of Genesee Street to re-establish Joseph Ellicott's radial street plan for downtown Buffalo. Re-establishing the radial street pattern was recommended by the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT).

Regional Decision-Making Alternatives

As an alternative course of decisionmaking, Erie County may decide to involve other agencies and entities involved with regional economic development and marketing (e.g., Erie and Niagara counties) into the convention center site selection process. The intent would be to expand the process outside of downtown Buffalo in order to incorporate a regional perspective on siting, designing, constructing, operating and marketing one or more state-of-the-art Convention Center facilities to better serve the western New York Region.

It is generally accepted that the existing convention centers in Buffalo and Niagara Falls currently are competing for the same market of regional trade shows, meetings, and events, and that both are losing market share to newer meeting facilities and hotels in western New York and elsewhere. It is also generally accepted that both facilities are outdated and are not competitive in terms of attracting national convention in terms of facility size, conditions, and facilities against peer cites that have new Convention Center facilities (e.g., Providence or Milwaukee).

As a metropolitan region with two urban centers, it is important to learn from how other similar regions are attracting and providing for both national conventions as well as regional and local trade shows and meetings in a manner that does not result in intra-regional competition.

There are currently many redevelopment initiatives currently being discussed in the City of Buffalo, the City of Niagara Falls, and in western New York (i.e., the Buffalo-Niagara Region). It is important that a project as large and important as the new Buffalo Convention Center be planned in a manner that is consistent with and complementary to these other unrelated initiatives. Specific initiatives such as USA Niagara Development Corporation proposals for the City of Niagara Falls, casino gaming, the inner harbor redevelopment, the Adelphia Building, as well as programmatic initiatives, such as BNE's regional marketing efforts, all need to be taken into account.

The initiative with the most potential impact and influence on the future success of the new Buffalo Convention Center would be USA Niagara Development Corporation. This initiative would redevelop a 192-acre portion of the Niagara Falls downtown business district for high-quality, tourism-related entertainment, hospitality and retail projects. This effort to enhance the City of Niagara Falls' attraction as a national and international tourist destination will certainly affect the success of a convention center in downtown Buffalo if such redevelopment is to include a new or expanded Niagara Falls convention center facility. This will particularly be the case if it will be of a similar size that would compete directly with that proposed for Buffalo.

Coordinated planning needs to take place in order to ensure that the most appropriate sites are selected for development and that they will simultaneously maximize the positive impacts and minimize the adverse impacts.

1.8 Summary of Public and Agency Involvement

The EIS Public Involvement process for the New Buffalo Convention Center EIS was initiated in March 2000 with the County's solicitation for lead agency status. In April 2000 the County issued a positive declaration and notice of intent to prepare an EIS for construction of a new Buffalo convention center. Involved and interested agencies were solicited to participate in the selection of the County as lead agency. Comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS were solicited from the public via an Open House/Informational Meeting held on March 27, 2001.

A notice of the scoping meeting was published in *The Buffalo News* on Sunday, March 25, 2001, and sent directly to involved and interested government agencies, state legislators, and local municipalities. This notice provided a summary of the SEQR process, a project description, and a list of issues. Comments received concerning the scoping document were considered in the overall preparation of this report.

Included in this EIS as Appendix A is a summary of the scoping meeting and written comments. Appendix A also includes the "Notice of Public EIS Scoping Session," the scoping agenda and background information, a list of all involved and interested agencies, the scoping meeting attendance sheets, scoping meeting summary, and all comments received.

The public scoping open house was held March 27, 2001, at the Buffalo Convention Center. In addition to comments received at the public scoping open house, the county received written statements through the close of the public scoping period, April 24, 2001. Public scoping comments were received in various ways. The County received written comments during the scoping meeting and also by mail following the meeting. Comments were also provided through the County's web site (http://www.bfloconventioncenter.ene.com). A total of 93 people signed in at the Scoping Meeting and 70 statements were submitted prior to April 24, 2001.

The comments that were received ranged from being both supportive of and critical of a new convention center. Comments indicated preference for the Mohawk Site, the Waterfront site, expanding the existing Center, and the suggestion to "do nothing." Many questioned the wisdom of doing the project at all while others demanded that they project be built immediately. Many argued

against a "silver bullet" and advocated using the money to encourage and support residential and smaller-scale economic development initiatives. Others argued that a regional perspective must be taken and evaluate the potential of developing a new convention center facility in Niagara Falls and enhancing the facility in Buffalo without expanding it.

The main issues of concern presented at the scoping meeting and in written comments included the following items:

- Purpose and need for a new convention center;
- Suitability of the various alternatives;
- Impact on existing structures and lost opportunity costs (e.g., residential development and small businesses) at the Mohawk Site;
- Impacts on the City's urban fabric, neighborhood character, pedestrian activity, and loss of diversity within/near a site;
- Projected vs. actual economic impact, taking into account the loss of existing economic activity generated on the Mohawk Site;
- Implications of the recent R/UDAT findings and conclusions;
- Traffic impacts;
- Broad support for incorporating "Green Design" principles and practices in any alternative; and
- Project costs and benefits.

As required by the SEQR process, these items are the focus of the EIS. In fact, the purpose of and need for this project was such a predominant theme in the public comments that this Draft EIS devotes an entire chapter to evaluating the purpose and need for the proposed new Buffalo Convention Center. In conjunction with the review of this EIS by the public and the involved and interested agencies, a public hearing will be held. This hearing will be organized and public notices published in accordance with SEQR requirements.

Copies of this Draft EIS will be available for viewing at the following repositories:

- Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
  10th Floor
  Erie County Office Building
  95 Franklin Street
  Buffalo, NY 14202
  Contact: Michael Krasner, AICP, Senior Planner
  (716) 684-8060

- Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
  Central Library
  Lafayette Square
  Buffalo, NY 14202

2

Purpose and Need

Establishing the purpose and need for the proposed New Buffalo Convention Center is critical to determining how the project proceeds. For the project to have the positive impacts on the local economy and community image that both current and previous studies have suggested it will generate, the EIS recommends that the project be undertaken within a regional context. The construction and operation of the facility, in theory, should be rational not only for the City of Buffalo and Erie County, but for the region as a whole. While this EIS looks at potential impacts at and near the project site(s), it also addresses positive and adverse impacts on the region (i.e., Erie and Niagara counties).

To facilitate informed decision-making, this EIS evaluates recent developments influencing the project's purpose and need and does not rely solely on the need established by previous studies. This section describes the trends in the usage of the Buffalo Convention Center over the past five years. Deficiencies of the current facility are identified and evaluated as contributing to the decline in the competitiveness of the existing center. The results and conclusions of previous Convention Center studies are then summarized. With a regional perspective in mind, the need for hotel and meeting space is compared to currently available hotel and meeting room facilities available throughout Erie and Niagara counties. Available parking facilities and recent parking studies are also summarized. To evaluate competition, this section describes how the Buffalo Convention Center competes against both other regional convention centers (including the City of Niagara Falls), as well as other local venues and competing cities.

It is important to note that the Erie-Niagara Region is different from these other competing cities in one important respect, this area has two distinct urban centers within the same metropolitan area. To understand how this situation can be turned into a positive, the EIS describes how other similar metropolitan areas pro-

vide for convention center facilities that benefit each urban center without competing with one another.

Finally, other regional and local plans and initiatives are described in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of constructing a new convention center will be compatible.

2.1 Buffalo Convention Center Economic Trends (1996-2000)

Information regarding business activity for years from 1996 to 2000 was supplied by the Buffalo Convention Center for analysis. This information consisted of event, type of event, duration, spatial requirements, attendance, rent, and food service revenues. This information was entered into a database for analysis. In addition, financial statements for the Buffalo Convention Center were supplied for these years. The following is a summary and breakdown of some of the initial findings.

A few different measures of activity were observed, from number of events and attendees, to square feet of space used and utilization of that space. Information on other trends, concerns, and future estimations were also provided.

Events

As noted in Table 2-1, there were 229 events in the year 2000, almost a 16% decrease from 1996. The best year for facility usage occurred in 1997, when 282 events were held at the convention center. The most common types of events are meetings, which average about 179.8 a year, nearly 71% of the total events on average.

Table 2-1 Number of Events by Type for 1996 through 2000

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total	Average	Percent Change from 1996 to 2000
Convention	10	24	21	20	14	89	17.8	40%
Consumer Show	17	15	14	10	11	67	13.4	-35%
Meetings	197	184	180	171	167	899	179.8	-15%
Trade Shows	10	11	9	10	9	49	9.8	-10%
Other*	39	48	28	17	28	160	32	-28%
Total	**273**	**282**	**252**	**228**	**229**	**1,264**	**253**	**-16%**

* Other events include exams, or personal events such as weddings, parties, etc.

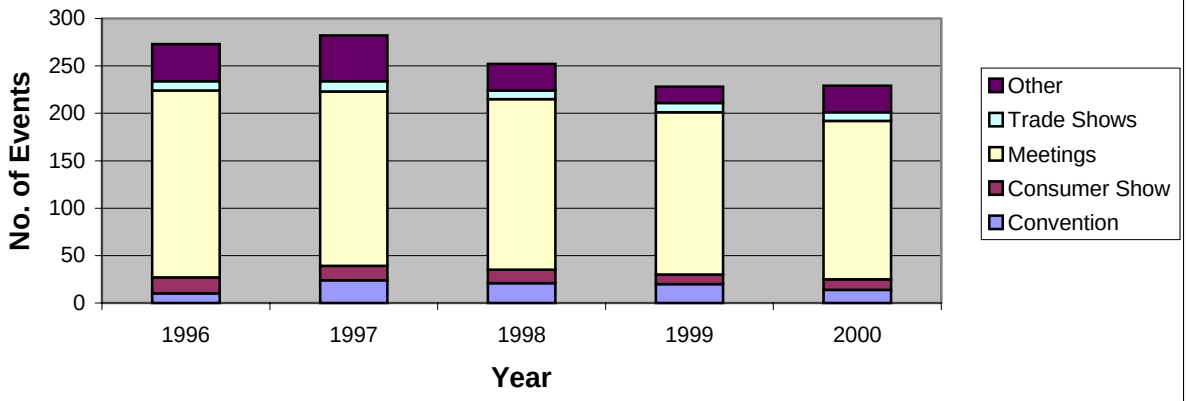
Source: Buffalo Convention Center Data.

Figure 2-1 presents the total number of events for the years 1996 to 2000 along with a breakdown of what event type is represented: meetings, consumer shows, trade shows, conventions, or other (e.g., exams, personal events). In 1997 the largest number of

events was held out of the years for which data was available, a total of 282 events. The majority of events held in 1997, as with all of the years, was meetings. The number of events has declined for both 1998 and 1999, leveling off in 2000, with 229 events.

When looking at the type of event over the given years, there is no discernable pattern or trend on a percent of total analysis. Meeting numbers are fairly consistent from year to year, most likely due to the nature of hosting local and regional weekly, monthly, and annual meetings. Conventions are showing a 40% increase since 1996. However, there has been a 35% decrease in consumer shows and a 28% loss of other events.

Figure 2-1 Number and Type of Event per Year



In summary, the number of events held in the convention center has declined 16% over the past five years. This reduction is significant and in large part due to the condition of the facility and increased competition from other convention center markets.

Attendees

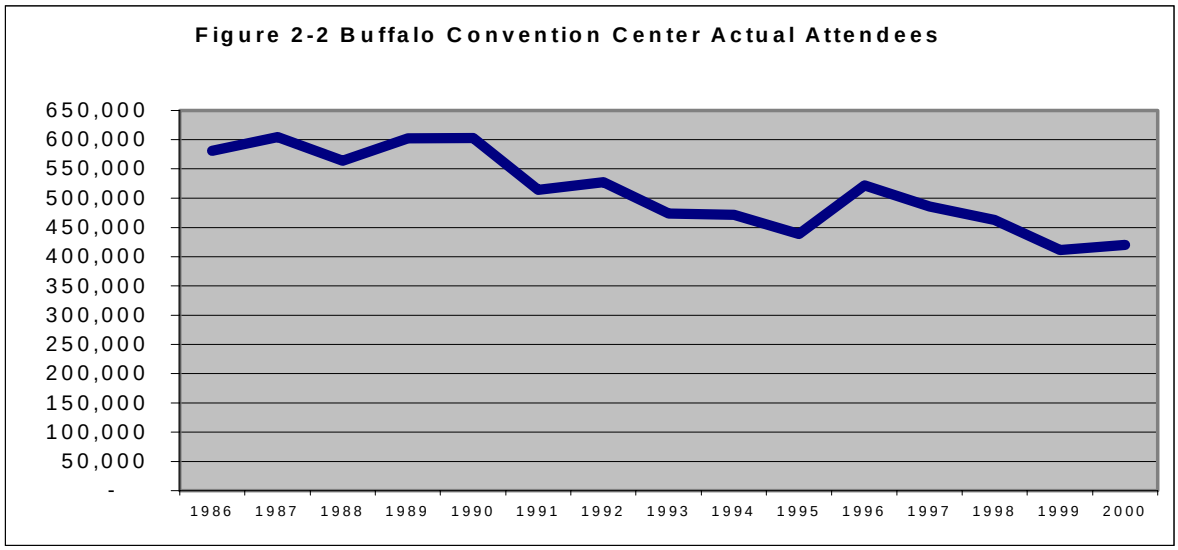
As noted in Table 2-2, a total of 420,159 attendees visited the Buffalo Convention Center for an event in 2000. The number of attendees on a yearly basis has been declining since 1996, with only a small increase occurring in 2000. Table 2-2 presents actual numbers of attendees for each type of event during years 1996 to 2000.

Table 2-2 Attendees for Event Type for 1996 to 2000

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total	Average	% Change 1996-2000
Conventions	18,168	42,900	33,883	27,263	33,982	156,196	31,239	87%
Consumer Shows	425,400	344,912	349,921	299,038	305,955	1,725,226	345,045	-28%
Trade Shows	5,140	9,554	5,847	8,510	9,755	38,806	7,761	90%
Meetings	41,237	48,823	36,351	40,756	42,966	210,133	42,027	4%
Other	31,725	38,957	30,087	35,975	27,501	164,245	32,849	-13%
Total:	**521,670**	**485,146**	**456,089**	**411,542**	**420,159**	**2,294,606**	**418,921**	**-19%**

Source: Buffalo Convention Center Data, 2001

Figure 2-2 shows the decline in attendees over the past fifteen years. The year 2000 was the first year since 1996 to experience a slight growth in attendees from the prior year. Overall, from 1986 to 2000, there was a 28% decrease in number of attendees of events at the Buffalo Convention Center. Though 1997 had the highest number of events from 1996 to 2000, it drew fewer attendees than in 1996. The years with the highest attendance for which data was available was 1987, 1989, and 1990 which all were over 600,000.

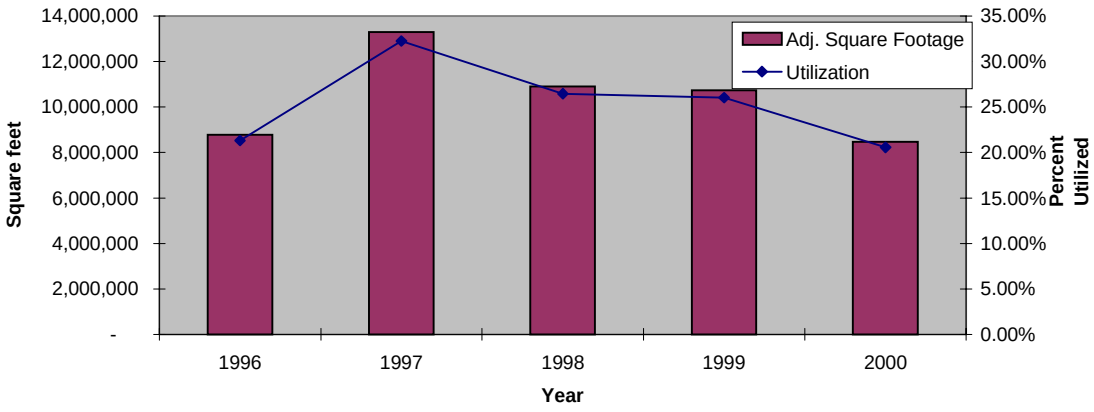


These statistics show a trend of an overall increase in usage of the convention center with an 87% increase in convention attendance and a 40% increase in convention center events from 1996 to 2000. However, there has been a 13% reduction in other events and other attendance from 1996 to 2000. There has also been a 90% increase in the number of trade show attendees over the past five years. These increases are not sufficient to offset the reductions in other event types, particularly the consumer shows, but in the future, this market for trade and consumer shows could be further explored and advanced.

Square Footage and Utilization

Figure 2-3 shows space used by the conventions on a yearly basis and the utilization of the convention center as a percent of total space available. Utilization was calculated based on summary square footage of all rooms and combinations of rooms used for an event over the course of a year divided by the total square footage of the facility. The calculation does not adjust for normal facility downtime. The year 1997 proved to be the best of the five years for which data is available for the quantity and utilization of convention space (corresponding with the highest number of events booked), but these numbers have been declining with the loss of bookings and decrease in number of events at the convention center.

Figure 2-3 Square Footage and Utilization



Historically, attendance at the center has been highly seasonal. Contrary to the perception that the Buffalo Convention Center operates less in the winter months due to adverse weather conditions, that is not the case, as evidenced by square footage and attendance statistics.

As noted in Table 2-3, there is a peak in activity during the months of February and March in attendance and again in March with utilization. This is due to two annual events that are booked during these months, the Auto Show and the Home and Garden Show. These shows mainly attract local attendees. Local trade shows, involving local patronage and visitors, do not carry the same magnitude of economic stimulus that conventions carry. Local meetings involve primarily day trips to the center and expenditures that can be classified as transfers of wealth within Erie County as op-

posed to new funds being injected or imported to our region from out of town visitors attending conventions. Very few hotel room nights are generated by local events and meetings.

Table 2-3 Combined Five Years Utilization and Attendance

	Adjusted Square Footage	Attendees
January	3,115,253	82,278
February	4,606,369	744,865
March	8,463,257	742,070
April	4,694,220	156,966
May	4,554,264	88,812
June	3,331,043	57,876
July	4,594,869	18,687
August	1,943,990	43,724
September	3,852,785	55,587
October	4,764,388	79,940
November	5,613,852	114,488
December	2,676,121	116,399
Total	**52,210,411**	**2,301,692**

In addition, Tables 2-4 and 2-5 provide utilization measures for attendance by month and by day of the week for 1996 and 2000. These tables show that the facility is used most heavily on the weekends in the first two quarters of the year. Also, there is less activity in the beginning of the work week and the last quarters of the year. These general trends have not changed significantly from 1996 to 2000.

Table 2-4 Year 1996 – Attendance by Day of the Week per Month of the Year

Month	Year	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total	In %
January	1996	810	10	-	160	3,053	2,718	12,116	18,867	4%
February	1996	71	-	27,050	34,670	34,512	35,790	34,500	166,593	32%
March	1996	13,894	13,964	15,034	13,994	28,931	44,928	43,078	173,823	33%
April	1996	1,289	1,363	1,913	895	9,678	9,881	10,011	35,030	7%
May	1996	64	615	1,408	3,854	2,209	1,854	635	10,639	2%
June	1996	1,252	537	284	1,096	4,886	4,759	4,386	17,200	3%
July	1996	189	10	42	177	45	1,366	-	1,829	0%
August	1996	132	3,057	67	173	-	2,705	-	6,134	1%
September	1996	193	375	7	561	1,614	2,856	300	5,906	1%
October	1996	3,698	1,189	6,133	7,391	896	3,297	6,887	29,491	6%
November	1996	724	181	1,092	4,295	1,871	9,769	1,033	18,965	4%
December	1996	151	9,715	716	9,763	5,313	6,523	5,000	37,181	7%
Total:		**22,467**	**31,016**	**53,746**	**77,029**	**93,008**	**126,446**	**17,946**	**521,658**	**100**
Attendance In %		**4.3**	**5.9**	**10.3**	**14.8**	**17.8**	**24.2**	**22.6**	**100.0**	

Table 2-5 Year 2000 – Attendance by Day of the Week per Month of the Year

Month	Year	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total	In %
January	2000	644	1,285	40	13	688	622	5,754	9,046	2%
February	2000	63	140	28,200	28,670	30,895	32,302	30,887	151,157	36%
March	2000	11,174	11,111	11,111	12,046	18,479	29,663	30,415	123,999	30%
April	2000	3,241	472	1,300	1,780	1,545	8,015	7,286	23,639	6%
May	2000	55	359	383	7,234	9,658	7,942	480	26,111	6%
June	2000	395	3,716	15	247	2,309	2,720	2,089	11,491	3%
July	2000	854	500	570	300	312	490	885	3,911	1%
August	2000	102	671	-	336	1,964	2,083	1,685	6,841	2%
September	2000	167	1,740	125	590	445	9,015	-	12,082	3%
October	2000	618	936	1,520	1,790	1,291	638	-	6,793	2%
November	2000	284	2,274	1,367	13,910	3,449	6,561	487	28,332	7%
December	2000	217	356	-	6,000	1,494	3,580	5,111	16,758	4%
Total:		**17,814**	**23,560**	**44,631**	**72,916**	**72,529**	**103,631**	**85,079**	**420,160**	**100**
Attendance In %		**4.2**	**5.6**	**10.6**	**17.4**	**17.3**	**24.7**	**20.2**	**100.0**	

Financial Statements

Through an examination of the financial statements supplied by the Buffalo Convention Center, a few general statements can be made regarding the business activities from 1996 to 2000.

There has been essentially no growth in convention sales and revenue over the past five years. The unrestricted revenue from grants/subsidies, rental, and in-house catering service revenues, etc., has remained fairly constant, fluctuating around $2 million a year. However, this is partially due to increases in grants/subsidies to counter losses in revenue due to decreases in events held at the convention center over the past five years (see Table 2-6).

Calculations were made to determine the type of event that generates the most revenue (from rent and food and beverage sales) per square foot (see Figure 2-4) and per attendee (see Figure 2-5) in order to obtain information on what type of events may be drawing the most money to the Buffalo Convention Center.

As noted, local meetings (with no food service) earn the most money per attendee at about $10.50 per attendee, followed closely by local meetings with food services ($7.90 per attendee), other/special events ($7.00/person) and trade shows ($6.75/person).

Although conventions generate approximately $3.25/attendee, they do generate the most revenue when compared with space rented, at $.55 per square foot.

Figure 2-4 Revenues per Attendee

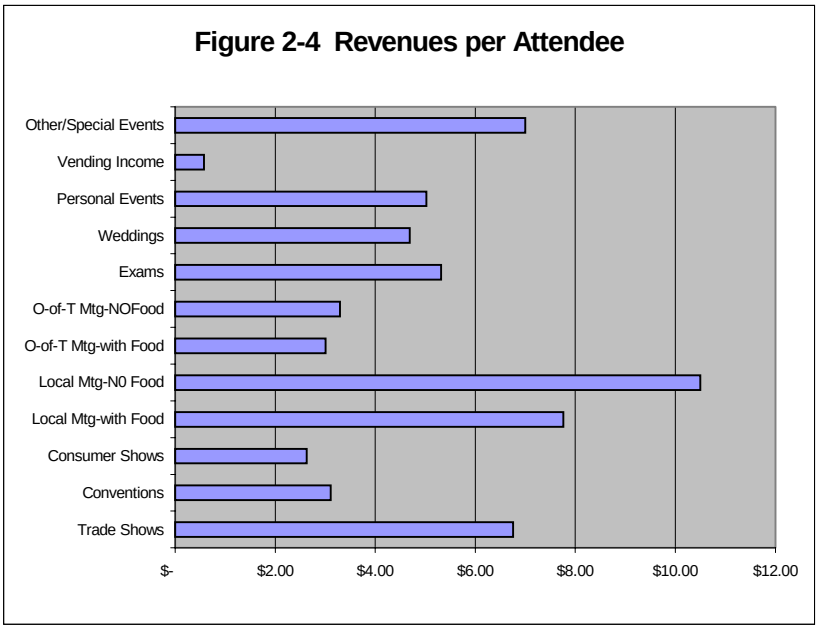
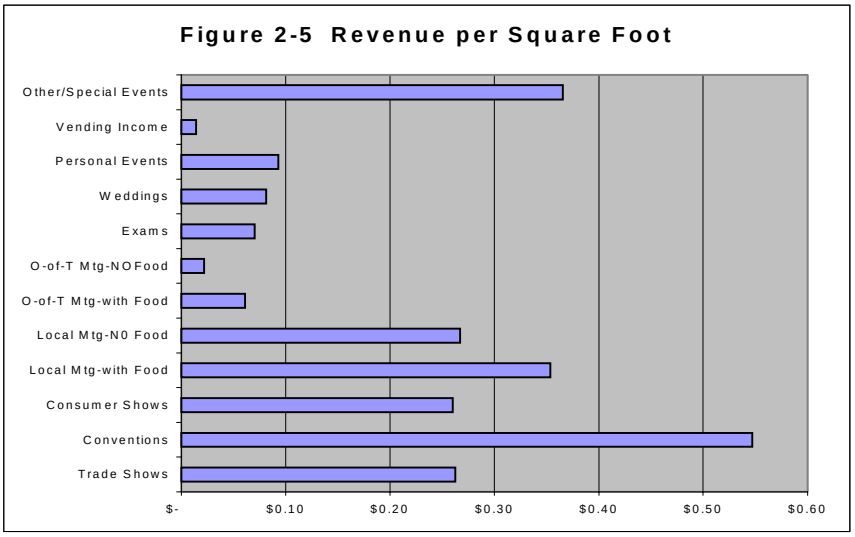


Figure 2-5 Revenue per Square Foot



The historic operating statements are summarized below in Table 2-6 and show that the financial performance of the convention center has deteriorated since 1997. The operating revenue has dropped from approximately $1.2 million in 1997 to $790,000 in 2000, while the total operating expenses have only fallen slightly, from $1.95 million in 1997 to $1.86 million in 2000. As a result, the ratio of operating revenue to operating expenses (i.e., the operating margin) has fallen from 61.5% in 1997 to 43% in 2000 following the lower effective utilization of the facility. This has caused the incremental financial burden, or the subsidy, of the con-

vention center to the county to increase over the last few years. The subsidy per occupied square foot of space rose from $0.075 in 1997 to $0.14 in 2000.

Table 2-6 Historic Operating Statements - Buffalo Convention Center, 1996 to 2000

BCC Operating Performance	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Operating Revenue	783,142	1,198,241	910,783	1,060,944	792,887
Total Operating Expenses	1,710,459	1,947,135	1,730,320	1,944,142	1,862,213
Net Operating Income	(927,317)	(748,894)	(819,537)	(883,198)	(1,069,326)
Operational Subsidy	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,075,000	1,175,000
Net Surplus (deficiency) of general operating revenue	72,683	251,106	180,463	191,802	105,674
Purchase of Property & Equipment	6,925	113,806	82,082	55,300	104,877
Debt Service Payments	-	25,224	114,060	114,060	114,060
Net Surplus (deficiency) of general	65,758	112,076	(15,679)	2,442	- 113,263
operating fund revenue					0
Addendum:					
Operating Margin (Oper. Rev. / Oper. Ex	45.8%	61.5%	52.6%	54.6%	42.6%
Occupied Square Feet Per Year	8,792,165	13,302,691	10,913,481	10,730,916	8,476,848
Total Available Square Feet Per Year *	41,211,055	41,211,055	41,211,055	41,211,055	41,211,055
Effective Utilization	21.3%	32.3%	26.5%	26.0%	20.6%
Rental revenue per occupied square feet	$ 0.060	$ 0.051	$ 0.048	$ 0.055	$ 0.052
Net catering revenue per occupied sq. t.	$ 0.024	$ 0.033	$ 0.030	$ 0.038	$ 0.038
Operating revenue per occupied square feet	$ 0.089	$ 0.090	$ 0.083	$ 0.099	$ 0.094
Operational subsidy per occupied square feet	$ 0.114	$ 0.075	$ 0.092	$ 0.100	$ 0.139
Operating expenses per occupied square feet	$ 0.195	$ 0.146	$ 0.159	$ 0.181	$ 0.220

Notes:

* Not adjusted for normal facility downtime.

Buffalo Convention Center – Projected vs. Actual Impacts from Other Projects

The EIS team researched how other cities had fared in terms of economic impacts compared to what had been forecasted or predicted by analysts. Given the diverse nature of economic systems, it is difficult to isolate total or cumulative economic impacts attributable to convention center projects from other spending drivers in these systems. Peer cities, such as Providence, Columbus, Milwaukee and other cities such as New York City and Atlanta, were contacted for information about event number, type, and attendance. Projections were evaluated within the context of overall growth in economic output for the regions.

Projections were obtained from sources that include feasibility studies completed by C.H. Johnson, Coopers and Lybrand/Price Waterhouse Coopers LLP; and Spectacor Management Group (SMG), as well as from convention center management of various facilities. The units of measurement, however, were not consistent from city to city, making it difficult to compare the projected and actual values.

Where a city had underused available resources, the spending associated with convention center projects can act to stimulate regional economic activity.

Conclusions on Business Trends

Drawing from the information presented in the previous sections relating to events, attendees, and utilization, it can be determined that for the years for which data is available, there has been a noticeable decline in business activities at the Buffalo Convention Center. The financial records show that the Center's overall performance has deteriorated since 1997 due to the lower effective utilization of the facility. The financial burden to the County, in the form of the operational subsidy to the convention center has continued to increase since 1997. There are fewer larger conventions, which tend to attract more out-of-town attendees and produce more revenue for the economy from hotel nights and general eating and drinking revenues. Trade shows and meetings are the only two event types that have increased since 1996, however, the attendees at these events are primarily local and do not introduce new spending stimulus to the economy. Therefore, there is a clear need to alter the current downward economic trends for the convention center through replacing or rehabilitating the existing out-of-date facility with a more cost-effective center.

Future Trends – Definite vs. Tentative Schedule for 2002-2007

In an article recently appearing in *Business First of Buffalo*, it was revealed that the Buffalo-Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau set an all-time mark for new bookings for the month of May with 31 events. Of these, 12 are sports-related events, which is part of a new path the CVB is taking to fill the void of major/national conventions because it is felt that the Buffalo Convention Center is obsolete (*Business First of Buffalo* 6/13/01). This high number of bookings is a change from the trend over the past five years where there has been very limited growth, and in some years, a decline in convention activity.

In December of 2001, the CVB announced that it had signed 205 future events through early December, compared to 165 events during the same period in 2000. The 205 events booked are expected to bring 109,550 visitors to the region generating 100,000 hotel room nights and have an economic impact of more than $66 million (*Buffalo News* December 30, 2000). However, it should be noted that these larger convention events that are drawing out-of-town visitors are amateur sporting events. While the CVB has shown recent success in sports niche-marketing and attracting amateur sporting events to the region, these events are not using the existing Convention Center.

Information was also provided for scheduled events in future years from the CVB. These are categorized at 'definite' or 'tentative' events and are listed in Table 2-7.

Table 2-7 Estimated Future Events and Attendees 2002 to 2007

	Number of Events	Estimated Attendance
2002		
Definite	9	7,150
Tentative	24	49,800
Total	**33**	**56,950**
2003		
Definite	3	5,300
Tentative	24	25,300
Total	**27**	**30,600**
2004		
Definite	1	4,500
Tentative	11	15,050
Total	**12**	**19,550**
2005		
Definite	0	-
Tentative	12	17,000
Total	**12**	**17,000**
2006		
Definite	0	-
Tentative	2	3,900
Total	**2**	**3,900**
2007		
Definite	0	-
Tentative	2	1,200
Total	**2**	**1,200**

Source: Groups Using the Buffalo Convention Center – Buffalo CVB – Richard Geiger, 2001

These projected trends are too far into the future to predict all additional bookings because many events are only planned one year or two years in advance. However, it does show that there is some expressed interest in continuing events at a convention center in Buffalo, even if it is perceived to be in a downward trend.

2.2 Deficiencies of the Current Facility

The primary deficiencies in the current Buffalo Convention Center facility that adversely affect its competitiveness include lack of free parking, outdated and inefficient meeting rooms and facilities, lack of state-of-the-art amenities (e.g., internet access in all meeting rooms), and perceived inaccessibility to hotel rooms (Geiger 2001; Florczak 2001; and Belanger 2001).

Not only is the amount of space and the quality of space often a deterrent for potential meeting planners, but the lack of parking in the downtown area for events held during business hours adds to the deficiency of the existing convention center. This issue is less important to events held in the evenings or on weekends, but during the week, parking in the area immediately surrounding the center is at a premium.

The Convention Center estimated a loss of approximately 24 events that were booked or were potential bookings (12 Consumer and 12 Trade Shows) due to this lack of parking (Florczak 2001a). These particular events named parking as either the sole factor or at least a contributing factor to their decision for leaving the Buffalo Convention Center. It is estimated from historical revenue and data that $400,000 a year is lost from these events using other venues (about $261,000 from rent and $139,000 from food and beverage) (Florczak 2001).

2.3 Conclusions of Prior Studies

Over the past five years numerous studies have been performed to determine the feasibility and/or need for a new convention center and to identify appropriate locations if one is to be constructed (see Table 2-8).

In 1997 the *Convention Center Feasibility Study* was commissioned by the Greater Buffalo Convention and Visitors Bureau and Buffalo Convention Center Management Board, focusing on renovation or enlargement of the existing Buffalo Convention Center compared to construction of a new center. The feasibility study concluded that the existing center could not meet future needs and the current site did not offer the potential for expansion that was

necessary. The proposed alternative was the construction of a new 425,000-gross square foot convention center with a 125,000-square foot main exhibition floor. This study performed a preliminary review of six possible sites in the downtown Buffalo area to determine if construction of a new convention center could be accommodated. The evaluation was preliminary in nature and did not evaluate sites in terms of their relationship to hotels, parking, restaurants, and entertainment venues (C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc. 1997).

Table 2-8 Recent Studies on the Proposed New Buffalo Convention Center

Date	Study	Focus of Study	Prepared By
December 1997	Convention Center Feasibility Study	Performed a market and feasibility study and of Buffalo's Convention facilities	C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc.
March 1998	Analysis of Factors Affecting the Development of a Convention Center Hotel in the City Of Buffalo	Analysis of conditions influencing the demand for hotel space in downtown Buffalo and surrounding region	Economic Research Associates (ERA)
November 1998	New Buffalo Convention Center Site Selection Study	Analysis of nine sites for a new Buffalo Convention Center	Cannon/SMG
March 2000	Fiscal and Economic Impacts of a new Buffalo Convention Center	Examined fiscal and economic impacts of a new Buffalo Convention Center	KPMG
July 2000	Convention Center Expansion Feasibility Study	Examined expansion and renovation potential of the existing Buffalo Convention Center	Stievater & Associates

A subsequent study, entitled *New Buffalo Convention Center Site Selection Study* was completed by Cannon/SMG in November 1998. This study focused on evaluating nine sites in downtown Buffalo for a new convention center in terms of 12 development objectives. The development objectives, listed below, formed the basis for the evaluation of the alternative sites.

1. Build a fully functional, state-of-the-art convention center.

2. Create a safe and appealing convention center district.

3. Reestablish Buffalo as a convention center destination.

4. Generate new room nights / increased hotel occupancy.

5. Stimulate growth for existing downtown business.

6. Create a reuse for the existing Convention Center.

7. Present a high-quality image of Buffalo.

8. Reinforce downtown Buffalo's position as a regional hub.

9. Bring more regional residents downtown.

10. Improve Buffalo's visitor/tourist infrastructure

11. Serve as a catalyst to economic development in the region.

12. Stimulate long-term development/redevelopment of downtown.

The study recommended that a new 400,000 to 425,000-gross square foot convention center with a 125,000-square foot main exhibit hall be constructed on an 11-acre site in downtown Buffalo known as the Mohawk Site (Cannon 1998). The study also recommended that to be competitive, the new convention center must have the essential space requirements and characteristics shown in Table 2-9.

Table 2-9 Convention Center Program Essential Characteristics

Space	Total range
Exhibition Halls	125,000 square feet
Meeting Space	25,000 to 30,000 square feet
Ballroom Space	25,000 to 30,000 square feet
Public Circulation/Public Services	67,800 to 80,500 square feet
Service Support	85,150 to 98,900 square feet
Food Service	14,8000 to 16,750 square feet
Administration	5,900 to 7,000 square feet
Total Gross Square Footage	**348,150 to 388,150 square feet***

* The study also recommended that the new convention center have the potential for an expansion of 75,000 to 150,000 square feet.

Source: New Buffalo Convention Center Site Selection Study, 1998.

Another study, prepared by ERA, analyzed factors affecting the development of a convention center hotel. This study determined that a new convention center alone would not generate enough demand to justify the costs of a new hotel downtown. The estimated

net income of a new 400-room convention hotel would be $33.4 million, with a cost of construction of $61.3 million. Therefore, the study's recommendations to stimulate the hotel industry was to build a new convention center in a location that relies on existing hotel and entertainment infrastructure with added parking capacity instead of a new convention hotel (ERA 1998).

In March 2000 an economic impact analysis was performed by KPMG comparing the fiscal benefits of the existing center to a new facility (KPMG 2000). Average attendance at all events including convention, trade shows, and meetings from 1996 to 1999, the percent of out of town attendees, and their length of stay, along with the spending habits of visitors was estimated for the baseline data.

The findings of this report show that overall attendance at the convention center had increased by 4%, with an increase in out-of-town attendees/delegates from 46% in 1996 to 57% in 1999. This was calculated as $57.9 million of direct spending annually by delegates and visitors for hotels, food, and incidentals. Development costs were calculated at approximately $150 million for a new convention center. This study determined that approximately 1,239 new jobs generated from a new convention center with a net economic impact from a new convention center of $112.6 million.

Finally, an expansion feasibility study performed to analyze convention center issues was prepared for the Erie County Department of Public Works and completed in July 2000. The study was performed to determine if an expansion of the existing convention center could successfully work as an alternative to construction of a new center on a new site. The essential needs of a new or renovated center were analyzed along with the deficiencies of the existing facility. Design recommendations were made and schematic site and floor plans were created for an expanded and improved facility on the existing site, contradicting previous studies to prove that the expansion study was a viable alternative to a new site.

As a result of these studies, in March 2000, the County initiated the SEQR process by declaring its intent to evaluate the construction of a new 400,000 to 425,000-gross square foot Buffalo Convention Center with hotel and parking at the Mohawk site through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Waterfront site and expansion of the existing convention center were selected as viable alternatives. SEQR mandates that a “critical look” at the potential economic and environmental consequences of the proposed project be taken. This includes a careful

evaluation of these studies' results to determine the best course of action for the County.

2.4 Need for New Hotel and Meeting Facilities

To evaluate the need for a new Buffalo convention center with an associated hotel facility, it is important to identify what other convention and meeting facilities are available locally and regionally. Table 2-10 identifies local and regional accommodations that also provide over 1,000 square feet of meeting space. As noted, there are a total of approximately 30 hotel facilities that provide approximately 5,816 guest rooms and 218 meeting rooms totaling 299,324 square feet. Of this, 92,380 square feet of meeting space is available within five hotels providing 1,339 guest rooms in downtown Buffalo.

As mentioned above, event attendance at the existing Buffalo Convention Center has steadily declined over the last five years. However, within Erie County as a whole, the overall bed tax has increased since 1996, as have room revenues (BNCVB 2001). In addition, Erie County's hotel occupancy rate was 66.7% in 2000 and, as of May 2001, The City of Buffalo's hotel occupancy rate was 67.2%. Table 2-11 shows hotel room revenues, bed tax, and the total number of convention center events for the years 1996 through 2000.

The categories listed in Table 2-11 are shown in Figure 2-6, which also depicts hotel room revenue, bed tax, and event attendance trends over the last five years. This figure implies that the convention center, while attracting fewer visitors to the region than in previous years, is not the region's sole strength. Rather, other factors or attractions (e.g., amateur sporting events) are contributing to this recent increase in hotel activity.

As shown in Figure 2-7, approximately 31% of hotel meeting space within the region is found in downtown Buffalo. Niagara Falls has 33% of hotel meeting space.

It is important to note that 37% of all hotels with meeting space in Erie and Niagara Counties are located in Niagara Falls. This is followed by the City of Buffalo (23%) and the Airport area (18%). In short, the City of Niagara Falls currently has over 800 rooms in hotels with meeting space, more than downtown Buffalo (see Figure 2-8).

Table 2-10 Regional Accommodations with 1000 Square Feet or More of Meeting Space

Hotel	Guest Rooms	Meeting Rooms	Total Square Feet	Average Rate (Double)	Largest Single Room Capacity			
					Theater Style	Banquet Style	Classroom Style	Booths
Downtown								
Adam's Mark Buffalo	486	24	72,000	$132	1,880	1,370	1,130	210
Hampton Inn and Suites, Down-town	144	2	1,000+	$109	90	40-50	60	0
Holiday Inn Buffalo	168	5	5,000	$110	190	275	70	12 to 15
Hyatt Regency Buffalo	395	19	13,180	$139	1,400	1,100	890	80 to 100
Radisson Suite Hotel, Downtown	146	3	1,200	$120	80	72	56	0
Subtotals	**1,339**	**53**						
Airport								
Days Inn Hotel, Buffalo	130	3	1,320	$94	100	80	60	N/A
Four Points Sheraton	292	11	6,300	$120	600	600	400	21 to 30
Buffalo Airport								
Garden Place Hotel	150	3	Approxi-mately 1,200	$84	40	40	25	0
Holiday Inn Buffalo Airport	207	6	3,600	$107	300	270	125	24
Radisson Hotel and Suites, Buffalo Airport	274	15	20,000	$121	850	700	400	50 to 70
Subtotals	**1,053**	**38**						
Suburban North								
Buffalo Niagara Marriott	356	10	8,100	$128	800	600	500	25
Holiday Inn, Buffalo/Amherst	199	8	3,663	$110	400	280	200	0
Holiday Inn Grand Island	261	13	54,015	$109	750	450	350	150 to 180
University Inn and Conference Center	120	14	4,080	$100	300	250	200	15 to 20
Subtotals	**936**	45						
Suburban South								
Holiday Inn Buffalo, Hamburg	130	3	1,477	$99	160	120	80	5
Holiday Inn Express Hotel and Suites, Buffalo	117	2	2,046	$120	150	110	90	0
McKinley Park Inn	78	8	N/A, 1000+	$76	1100	700	900	N/A
Subtotals	**325**	**13**						
Niagara Falls								
Best Western Inn on the River	149	13	18,918	$90	550	400	250	40
Best Western Lockport Inn	95	8	12,033	$75	355-550	350	120	40
Best Western Summit Inn	88	3	2,675	$99	200	175	100	N/A
Comfort Inn "The Pointe"	118	3	4,610	$132	360	300	185	20
Days Inn at the Falls	168	6	7,360	$130	577	430	300	N/A
Days Inn Riverview at the Falls	197	6	12,350	$99	1000	650	600	20
Holiday Inn at the Falls	161	3	2,000	$129	180	150	100	N/A
Holiday Inn Select	397	11	17,445	$109	800	400	270	50
Howard Johnson's Lodge	88	2	1,722	$105	120	125	75	N/A
Quality Inn at the Falls	217	5	5,214	N/A	300	240	180	8
Ramada Inn by the Falls	112	1	1,400	$109	200	175	100	N/A
Sheraton Four Points	180	3	3,480	$120	100	75	75	10
Travelodge Hotel Fallsview	193	5	9,936	$99	500	350	180	N/A
Subtotals	**2163**	69						
Total	**5816**	218						

*Source: Meeting Planners' Guides, Greater Buffalo CVB and Niagara Falls CVB; and sales offices of individual facilities

Table 2-11 Hotel and Convention Center Activity

Year	Bed Tax	Hotel Room Revenues	Buffalo Convention Center Event Attendance
1996	$4,426,577	$88,531,547.20	521,670
1997	$4,482,657	$89,653,135.80	485,746
1998	$4,459,628	$89,192,562.60	462,590
1999	$4,705,387	$94,107,747.60	411,542
2000	$5,519,351	$110,387,025.00	420,159

Figure 2-6 Attendees vs. Hotel Activity

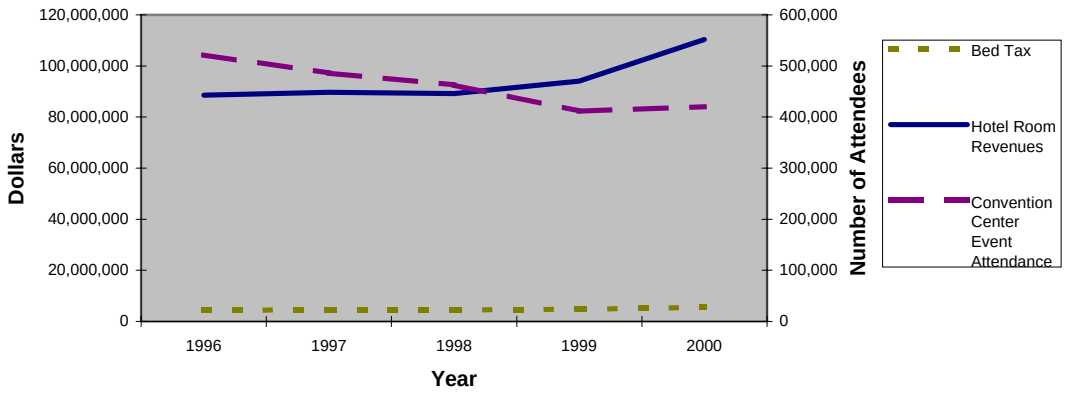


Figure 2-7: Percent Share of Hotel Meeting Space by Area

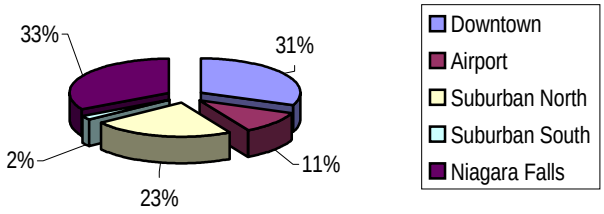
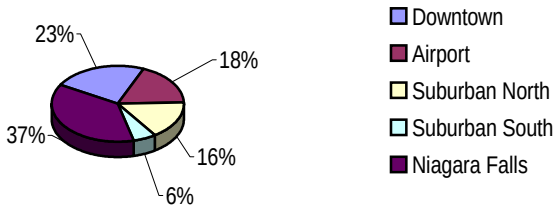
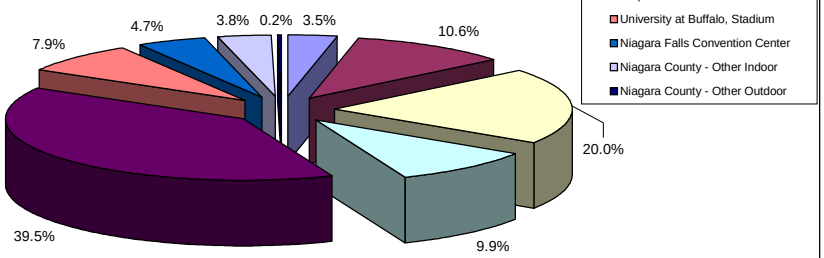


Figure 2-8: Percent Share of Guest Rooms (in hotels with over 1000 square feet of meeting space) by Area



In order to show competing meeting space (without accommodations), Table 2-12 shows the indoor and outdoor event facilities available in Erie and Niagara counties respectively. Figure 2-9 illustrates that the Buffalo Convention Center accounts for only 3.8% of the seating capacity available locally and regionally (at facilities without lodging), while the Niagara Falls Convention Center accounts for 4.7% of seating capacity available locally and regionally.

Figure 2-9 Seating Capacity Percent of Total



While there are approximately 1,400 guest rooms in hotels with over 1,000 square feet of meeting space, an estimated 1,882 guest rooms within the City of Buffalo are available to conventioneers and other visitors. In addition, there is a greater number of brand-name hotels in the City of Buffalo than in Niagara Falls, which meeting planners view as desirable when selecting a convention center location (Geiger, 8/2/01). The City of Niagara Falls hotel occupancy was 57.5% in May, while City of Buffalo hotel occupancy was higher at 67.2% (*Buffalo Business First* August 13, 2001).

Table 2-12 Event Facilities (without Accommodations)

	Maximum Seating Capacity
Erie County	
Indoor	
Buffalo Convention Center	7,000
Buffalo State College, Arena	3,500
Buffalo State College, Rockwell Hall	856
Burt Flickinger Athletic Center	2,500
Canisius College, Koessler Center	2,000
International Agri-Center	5,000
Kleinhan's Music Hall	2,850
HSBC Arena	21,500
McCoy Convention Center	750
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr., Fieldhouse	5,000
Shea's Performing Arts Center	3,183
University at Buffalo, Alumni Arena	less than 10,000
Western New York Event Centre	5,000
Outdoor	
Dunn Tire Park	20,050
Ralph Wilson Stadium	80,024
University at Buffalo, Stadium	16,000
Niagara County	
Indoor	
Aquarium of Niagara	400
Artpark	3,000
New York State Parks Visitor Center	300
Lockport Locks	450
Niagara Falls Convention Center	9,484
Niagara Falls High School	1700
Niagara University	300
Rainbow Centre Factory Outlet Mall	1,500
Outdoor	
Grand Lady Cruises	125
Niagara Clipper	275
Total	**202,247**

Source: Buffalo-Niagara CVB and Niagara Falls CVB, Meeting Planners Guides

2.5 Need for Additional Parking

As the proposal to construct a new Buffalo convention center considers surrounding accommodations and event facilities, it must also consider existing and future parking needs. The proposed convention center project will result in a certain number of displaced parkers, create a need for additional parking spaces or infrastructure, and provide additional parking spaces in a concentrated

area. This section discusses the existing parking problems as well as potential impacts on parking and summarizes the findings of an additional study below (Buffalo Place, Inc., 2000). Potential parking impacts are described in greater detail in Section 4 of this Draft EIS.

In March 2000 the consulting team of DESMAN Associates and Economics Research Associates (ERA) released a parking and access study that was commissioned by the Downtown Buffalo Parking Infrastructure Task Force. The study outlined strategies, options, and opportunities for the City of Buffalo and its civic partners to provide adequate, safe, and convenient parking to residents, employees, and visitors. The study was divided into the following seven distinct, yet interrelated phases:

- Phase 1: Existing and Future Parking Supply and Demand Analysis;
- Phase II: Parking Management Evaluation and Recommendations;
- Phase III: Customer Service Enhancements (Parking Operations);
- Phase IV: Impacts of Transit Initiatives of Parking Demand;
- Phase V: Parking Expansion Options and Recommendations;
- Phase VI: Financial Feasibility Analysis (Overall Parking System); and
- Phase VII: Economic Impact Analysis.

In considering future initiatives, the final report concludes that there is a need for additional downtown parking. For the purposes of this EIS, relevant findings of Phase 1 (Existing and Future Parking Supply and Demand Analysis) are summarized below (further parking and transportation analyses are provided in Section 4 of this Draft EIS).

The DESMAN study area comprises eight distinct downtown districts that are further divided into blocks: Main-Tupper, Theater District, Main-Genesee, Government Office, Elm-Oak Corridor, Retail Core, Office District, and Marine Midland. There are currently 22,619 off-street (ramps and lots) parking spaces within the study area, 14,445 of which are available to serve the general pub-

lic. The remaining 8,164 spaces are restricted to specific user groups/employers.

Of the 1,723 on-street spaces, the vast majority are 2-hour meters (65%). A significant percentage (11%) of the remaining on-street spaces are restricted/reserved for City and Federal employees and fleet vehicles.

Based on peak-period (11:00 AM to 1:00 PM) field surveys of publicly available off-street parking, DESMAN found that an overall surplus of 1,390 spaces currently exists within the City of Buffalo. While certain blocks and/or certain parking facilities do exhibit peak-period deficits, there are sufficient parking resources in nearby blocks and facilities to meet the current parking demands of all downtown sectors (see Figure 2-10). However, it is questionable whether these nearby facilities are within acceptable walking distances to the parker's destination, as a majority of the surplus exists in surface lots on the periphery of the study area (lots south of the Thruway, north of Chippewa Street and east of Oak Street). Parking deficiencies are most significant in and around Main Place Mall, in blocks north of the existing Convention Center and south of City Hall. Further deficiencies would arise in the vicinity of the Mohawk Site if a convention center were to be constructed (Buffalo Place, Inc., 2000).

In addition, DESMAN contends that the parking surpluses available in certain areas are not sufficient to meet the needs of potential downtown tenants who may request large blocks of parking for employees. An inventory of existing buildings (i.e., land uses) in Buffalo identified 18.1 million square feet of building space, including over 9.1 million square feet office, 1.2 million square feet light industrial, 1.12 million square feet retail, and 3.8 million square feet vacant. In the context of potential future development projects (e.g., Convention Center and Inner Harbor project), the study concludes that 1,565 existing spaces would be displaced and that new parking demands would create a deficit of 2,322 spaces. The study anticipates that the Buffalo Inner Harbor project will eliminate 392 existing spaces that fall within the DESMAN study area and displace 313 parkers and that construction of a convention center on the Mohawk Site with approximately 1,250 spaces would ultimately eliminate 989 existing spaces and displace 863 parkers. The Waterfront Site alternative (Block 306) provides 507 parking spaces that would be lost if a new convention center were constructed there.

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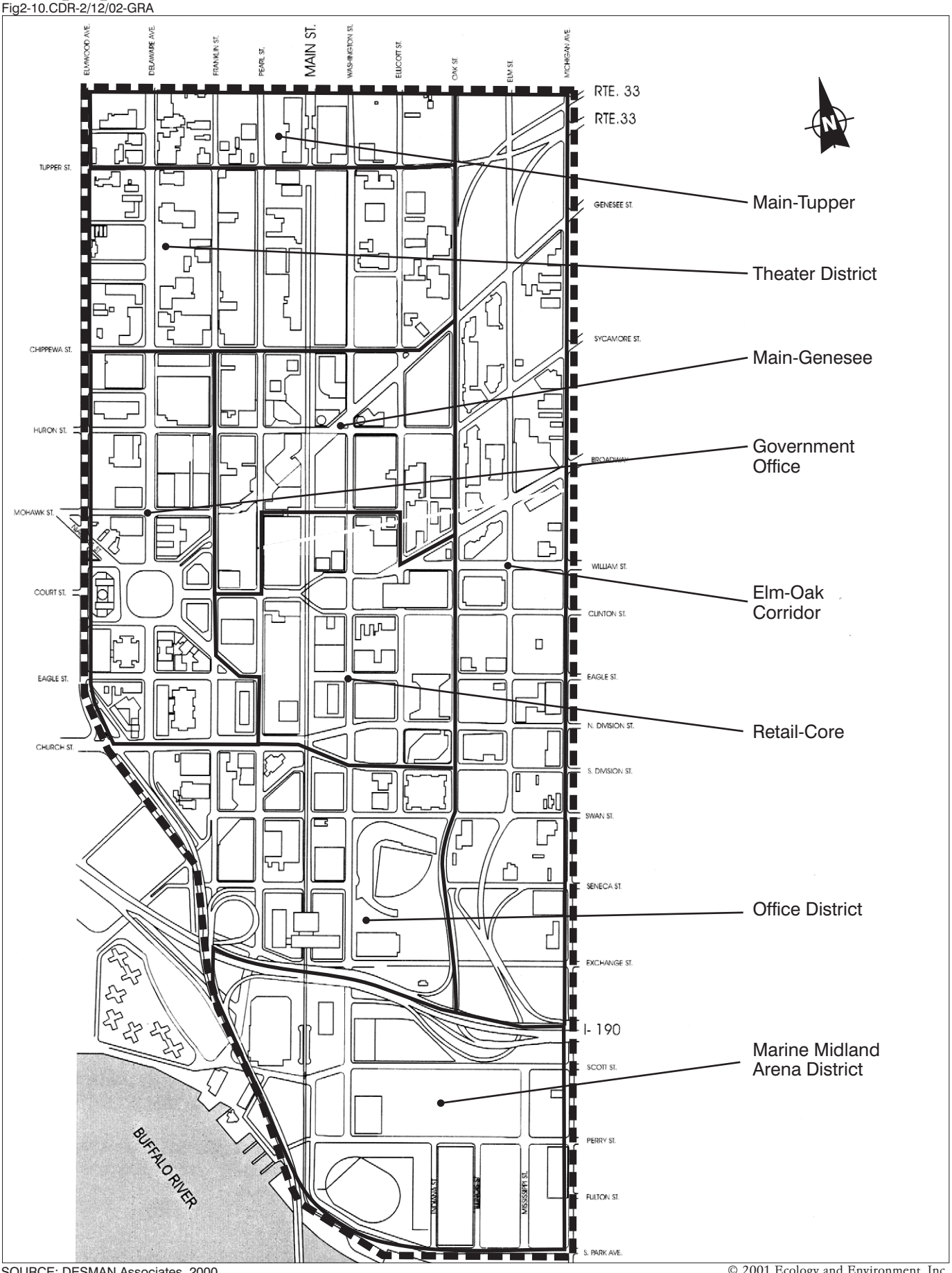

SOURCE: DESMAN Associates, 2000

Figure 2-10 DOWNTOWN BUFFALO PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION STUDY (STUDY AREA BOUNDARY AND DISTRICT (SECTOR) SUB AREAS)

As described above, the existing lack of parking in the downtown area is a major deterrent to potential clients of the existing Buffalo Convention Center and has resulted in substantial losses in revenue. The Convention Center estimated a loss of approximately 24 events that were booked or were potential bookings (12 Consumer and 12 Trade Shows) due to this parking deficiency. These particular events named parking as either the sole factor or at least a contributing factor to their decision for leaving the Buffalo Convention Center. It is estimated that approximately $400,000 per year is lost due to these events using other venues (about $261,000 from rent and $139,000 from food and beverage) (Florczak, 2001).

The additional losses of available parking associated with these proposed development projects or a new convention center will only be expected to exacerbate the current deficiencies in the downtown Buffalo area unless additional parking is provided.

2.6 Regional Convention Center Perspective – Buffalo and Niagara Falls

To fully evaluate the need for a new state-of-the-art convention center in Buffalo and Western New York, the EIS evaluated the situation from a regional perspective. Because the existing facility tends to cater increasingly to regional trade shows, exhibits, and meetings, it competes with similar space available in Erie and Niagara counties. This competition has resulted in the development of new convention and meeting space throughout the area that offers amenities the current Convention Center does not offer, such as free on-site parking; newer, more modern meeting facilities; and, in some cases, connected hotel facilities.

Table 2-13 provides a more detailed comparison of the existing Buffalo Convention Center and the Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center. Of particular importance is that both facilities are of similar size and offer similar amenities. The Buffalo Convention Center and the Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center are managed by different entities. The two centers primarily attract numerous small- to medium-sized events, with a limited number of national conventions compared to cities with larger convention centers. There are approximately 4,000 hotel rooms in Niagara Falls (including 2,000 within walking distance of the Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center) while the City of Buffalo has approximately 1,882 hotel rooms downtown and about 685 within walking distance of its convention center.

Table 2-13 Comparison of Existing Buffalo Convention Center to Niagara Falls Convention Center

	Buffalo	Niagara Falls
Population	292,648	55,593
Convention Center?	Yes	Yes
Manager	Erie County	Niagara Falls Redevelopment; SMG
Bookings	Buffalo-Niagara CVB	Niagara Falls CVB
Total Square Ft.	180,000; 64,610 prime	Approximately 115,000 exhibit/trade show space; additional 12,500 lobby
Available Parking	Yes, across street	Yes, 450 spaces on site
Adjacent Hotel?	Yes, Hyatt Regency (395)	Yes, Holiday Inn, 397 rooms
No. hotel rooms	1,882 downtown; 7,984 county	4,000 City; 2,000 walking distance, downtown
No. Events (2000)	229 total (14 conventions; 7 consumer; 199 meetings; 9 trade)	200 event days (2000)
No. Attendees	420,159 (2000)	250,000

Notes: no expansion plans

Erie County owns and operates the Buffalo Convention Center, which has 62,720 square foot exhibition space, a 12,637-square foot ballroom, and 12 additional function areas. In 2000, the center held 229 events (conventions, trade shows, consumer events, and meetings) with 420,159 visitors. The center has an attached 395-room Hyatt Regency Hotel, and the county hotel occupancy rate was 66.7% (STR 2000), while the city hotel occupancy rate was 67.2% in May 2001 (*Buffalo Business First* August 13, 2001).

The Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center is owned by the City of Niagara Falls and managed by Niagara Falls Redevelopment, with management subcontracted to ARAMARK Venues. The center is a multi-purpose complex with a grand ballroom (13,500 square feet), skylounge, Greek Theater, exhibition, and entertainment space. The center has approximately 115,000 square feet of exhibit space (83,500 arena, 17,000 second-level promenade, 13,500 ballroom) with a unique ceiling height of 75 feet.

The 12,500 square foot lobby has also been used in the past as additional exhibit space. The center has on-site parking (450 spaces) and a connected hotel with 395 rooms. There are 4,000 hotel rooms in the City of Niagara Falls and 2,000 rooms within walking distance of the convention center; with a May 2001 hotel occupancy rate of 57.5% (*Buffalo Business First* August 13, 2001).

The convention center had 200 event days in 2000 with 250,000 attendees.

2.7 Regional Convention Center Perspective – Other Competing Convention Centers

In exploring the need for a new or expanded convention center, this EIS evaluated peer cities, or those cities who compete with Buffalo for conventions. The peer cities contain convention centers of similar or marginally greater size than Buffalo. The cities reviewed include Providence, Rhode Island; Columbus, Ohio; Syracuse, New York; Rochester, New York; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Peer city facilities were also evaluated in terms of projected versus actual economic impacts. The facilities are generally described below.

Providence, Rhode Island

The State of Rhode Island has approximately 14.2 million visitors annually. The Rhode Island Convention Center opened in 1993 to make Providence competitive with other national and regional facilities. The center is located in the heart of the City of Providence, 15 minutes from the T.F. Green International Airport.

The convention center complex is managed by Spector Management Group and operated by the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority (RICCA). Event bookings and marketing are handled by the Providence-Warwick Convention and Visitors' Bureau. RICCA retains ownership of the adjoined Westin Providence Hotel.

The Convention Center Complex includes the center itself, the Westin Providence Hotel, and two parking garages. The center contains a 100,000-square feet exhibit hall and a 20,000-square feet ballroom in addition to pre-function space and 23 meeting rooms.

The Westin Providence is a 330,500-square feet facility that offers 363 guest rooms and office, retail, and lobby space in the adjacent Dome Building. There is additional meeting and function space within the hotel.

The convention center and hotel are served by two parking garages with a total of 2,500 spaces. The garages are linked to the convention center, hotel, and newly constructed Providence Place Mall by climate-controlled pedestrian bridges. The Convention Center Complex is adjacent to a 14,500-seat civic center.

As shown in Table 2-14, the Rhode Island Convention Center held 250 events in Fiscal Year 2000, approximately 5% more than the City of Buffalo. 52% of Rhode Island Convention Center events were meetings, group, or corporate gatherings and 26% were smaller events such as weddings and banquets. Public shows accounted for 10%, trade shows for 7%, and conventions were the least common at 5%. These events resulted in approximately 400,000 attendees for fiscal year 2000. As shown in Table 2-14, the Buffalo Convention Center event attendance was 420,159 in 2000, only slightly higher than that of Rhode Island. However, the overall decrease in convention attendance suggests that the larger conventions may be lost to state-of-the-art convention centers that may offer greater square footage of space, such as the center in Providence.

Table 2-14 Comparison of Providence, Rhode Island, Convention Center to Existing Buffalo Convention Center

	Providence	Buffalo
Population	173,618	292,648
Manager	SMG	Erie County
Bookings	Providence-Warwick CVB	Buffalo-Niagara CVB
Square footage	Approximately 120,000	180,000; 64,610 prime
No. Events (2000)	250+; 13 conventions	229 (2000); 14 conventions
No. Attendees (2000)	approx. 400,000	420,159
Number Hotel Rooms	2,743+ (downtown Providence)	1,882 downtown; 7,984 county
Occupancy	73.1 (1999)	66.7% county (2000); city 67.2% (May 2001)
Adjacent Hotels?	Y	Y, Hyatt Regency (395 rooms)
Available Parking	Y	Y, across street
Number Parking Spaces	2,500 adj., 4,500 near, 720 w/in	989
Number Employees	38,931 Providence	50,000 downtown

Source: Economic Impacts of the Rhode Island Convention Center; Providence-Warwick CVB Website

Columbus, Ohio

The City of Columbus has 711,470 residents, with 6.9 million overnight visitors annually. The Greater Columbus Convention Center (GCCC) opened in 1993 as an expansion of the Ohio Center (built in 1980). The new convention center was 1.4 million total square feet in size in 1993; it underwent a $85 million expansion project in 1998 to total 1.7 million square feet (completed in February 2001); and is currently undergoing an additional expansion. The facility is owned by the Franklin County Convention Facility

Authority (FCCFA) and managed by Spector Management Group. Events are booked through the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

The GCCC is connected to three hotels and is located 10 minutes from the recently expanded Port Columbus International Airport. The facility is within walking distance of several downtown attractions, including Nationwide Arena (home of the Columbus Blue-Jackets NHL team), art galleries, shops, restaurants, pubs, and a three-level shopping center. There is a new science center nearby and a significant number of new hotel rooms city-wide.

The GCCC attracts local and statewide conventions and meetings as well as national events. The facility offers a 450,000-square foot exhibit hall; 40,000-square feet ballroom space; 61 meeting rooms; and a 1,100-space parking facility with first-floor retail shops. The complex provides approximately 3,000 parking spaces within four parking lots and garages, with another 1,000 spaces within walking distance.

Retail space within the complex is divided into six precincts: a travel center; retail and services; business center; educational and conference facilities; food court and cafes; and a destination restaurant with entertainment.

As shown in Table 2-15, there were 635 events in 2000 (235 of which were conventions and tradeshows) with 543,560 attendees (SMG 2001). The tourism industry accounts for 53,000 employees county-wide. The Buffalo Convention Center held 229 events (14 of which were conventions) in 2000 with 420,159 attendees.

Table 2-15 Comparison of Columbus, Ohio, Convention Center to Buffalo Convention Center

	Columbus	Buffalo
Population	711,470	292,648
Manager	SMG	Erie County
Bookings	Franklin County Convention Facility Authority	Buffalo-Niagara CVB
Square footage	Approx. 560,000	180,000; 64,610 prime
No. Events (2000)	635 events; 235 conventions and tradeshows	229 events; 14 conventions
No. Attendees (2000)	1,905,488	420,159
Number Hotel Rooms	3,000 downtown	1,882 downtown; 7,984 county
Occupancy	73.1 (1999)	66.7% county (2000); 67.2% city (May 2001)

Table 2-15 Comparison of Columbus, Ohio, Convention Center to Buffalo Convention Center

	Columbus	Buffalo
Adjacent Hotels?	Y, three connected	Y, Hyatt Regency (395 rooms)
Available Parking	Y, three lots	Y, across street
Number Parking Spaces	3,000 within, 1,000 within walking distance	989
Number Employees	53,000 tourism (county)	50,000 (City)

Source: Greater Columbus CVB Website

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has a population of 610,700 and offers various meeting facilities. The largest facility is the Midwest Express Center, which is managed by the Wisconsin Center District. The District was established under the 1993 Wisconsin Act 263 to assume ownership of the existing convention facility and to construct and expand such facilities.

In 1998 the District financed and completed the construction of the Midwest Express Center, which offered 127,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 38,000-square feet ballroom, 32 meeting rooms and associated pre-function and service areas. Phase 2 was completed in 1999 and involved the demolition of the former convention facility and expansion of the exhibition hall to 188,000 square feet.

Event bookings are handled by both the Wisconsin Center District and the Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau. There are more than 2,600 hotels within walking distance of the convention facility, with 3,673 downtown hotel rooms, including upcoming construction.

Development of the Milwaukee Riverwalk has created a corridor of retail and residential development that is the fastest growing area in the City. In recent years, development has occurred both along the riverfront and in the downtown core. These developments include construction of an IMAX theater and a children's museum and expansion of a performing arts center. Other public projects include a recent expansion of the Milwaukee Art Museum and a Clown Hall of Fame.

As shown in Table 2-16, the GMCVB booked 38 groups in 2000, which attracted 109,351 convention visitors. While this is significantly lower than events held at the Buffalo Convention Center, updated information that reflects events booked by the Wisconsin Center District is currently unavailable. However, in the year prior to expansion of the Midwest Express Center (1997), there were

551,132 attendees (Wisconsin Center District), while in that same year Buffalo Convention Center events attracted 485,746 visitors (Buffalo-Niagara CVB). As convention revenues and tourism spending have increased since the Midwest Express District's 1998 expansion (Milwaukee CVB), it can be assumed that event attendance has also increased since 1997. Conversely, as mentioned earlier, Buffalo Convention Center event attendance has generally decreased in the last five years, supporting the conclusion that Milwaukee still attracts significantly more conventioneers and event attendees annually.

Table 2-16 Comparison of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Convention Center to Existing Buffalo Convention Center

	Milwaukee	Buffalo
Population	610,700	292,648
Manager	Wisconsin Center District	Erie County
Bookings	Wisconsin Center District, GMCVB	Buffalo-Niagara CVB
Square footage	667,475 (largest exhibit space, 188,695 sq. ft)	180,000; 64,610 prime
No. Events (2000)	38 booked by GMCVB	229 events; 14 conventions
No. Attendees (2000)	109,351 (events booked by GMCVB)	420,159
Number Hotel Rooms	2,652 within four blocks of center; 3,673 downtown (including upcoming construction)	1,882 downtown; 7,984 county
Occupancy	64.9% (1999)	66.7% county (2000); 67.2% city (May 2001)
Adjacent Hotels?	N, several nearby	Y, Hyatt Regency (395 rooms)
Available Parking	Y	Y, across street
Number Parking Spaces	Approximately 2,000	989
Number Employees	471,311 (County 1997)	50,000 city

* Source: Greater Milwaukee CVB; Wisconsin Center District Feasibility Study

Syracuse, New York

Syracuse has a population of 147,306 persons, with a downtown population of 30,000 residents. There are 3.9 million visitors annually county-wide, and 4,000 first class hotel rooms within a 7-mile radius of downtown. The Convention Center at OnCenter,constructed in 1991, provides two exhibition halls; 10 breakout rooms; two drive-in locations with an enclosed loading dock; enclosed access to a 1,000space parking garage; and 99,000 square feet of meeting and exhibition space.

The OnCenter Complex consists of the Convention Center, War Memorial Center, and Mulroy Civic Theaters. The convention facility can accommodate conventions, meetings, banquets, consumer shows, trade shows, car shows, exhibitions, corporate awards dinners, and other events with a 19,000-square feet ball-

room and a 65,000-square feet exhibition hall. In addition, the adjacent War Memorial Center offers a 44,000-square feet exhibition hall, with a total of 91,000 square feet on three levels. The War Memorial Center is also used for conventions and other events. Events are booked through the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Table 2-17 compares the Syracuse, New York, convention center to the existing Buffalo Convention Center. There are over 4,000 first-class hotel rooms within a 7-mile radius of downtown Syracuse. In downtown Buffalo there are 1,882 hotel rooms in proximity to the Convention Center and fewer first-class hotels than are in proximity to the convention center in Syracuse. Strengths of the OnComplex include proximity to an auditorium and theater complex, in addition to greater overall square footage of exhibition space.

Table 2-17 Comparison of Syracuse, New York, Convention Center to Existing Buffalo Convention Center

	Syracuse	Buffalo
Population	147,306	292,648
Manager	Self-managed	Erie County
Bookings	Syracuse CVB, OnCenter	Buffalo-Niagara CVB
Square footage	99,000	180,000; 64,610 prime
No. Events (2000)	N/A	229 events; 14 conventions
No. Attendees (2000)	N/A	420,159
Number Hotel Rooms	4,000 first-class within 7-mile radius of downtown	1,882 downtown; 7,984 county
Occupancy	N/A	66.7% (2000); 67.2% city (May 2001)
Adjacent Hotels?	N/A	Y, Hyatt Regency (395 rooms)
Available Parking	Y	Y, across street
Number Parking Spaces	1,000 spaces	989
Number Employees	N/A	50,000 city

* Source: Syracuse CVB

Rochester, New York

The City of Rochester, New York, has a population of 219,773 persons. Conventioneers attend events at several facilities including the area's largest, the Rochester Riverside Center. Constructed in 1986, the facility includes 25 meeting rooms, theater seating for 5,000 people, and a 100,000-square foot exhibit hall. The center handles its own event bookings and the facility is self-managed. The facility attracts regional shows, civic events, and national conventions.

As shown in Table 2-18, there are two hotels connected to the facility, each with more than 800 rooms. There are 1,200 commitable hotel rooms located in the vicinity of the Rochester Riverside Center. The center contains a parking garage with 1,800 spaces, and there are several surface lots nearby. The Buffalo Convention Center attracted a limited number of national conventions in 2000 (14 conventions) compared to the Rochester Riverside Center, which hosted 32 conventions and a total of 305 events.

Table 2-18 Comparison of Rochester, New York, Convention Center to Buffalo Convention Center

	Rochester	Buffalo
Population	219,773	292,648
Manager	Self-managed	Erie County
Bookings	Riverside Convention Center	Buffalo-Niagara CVB
Square footage	100,000	180,000; 64,610 prime
No. Events (2000)	305 events; 32 conventions	229 events; 14 conventions
No. Attendees (2000)	285,000	420,159
Number Hotel Rooms	1,200 commitable	1,882 downtown; 7,984 county
Occupancy	N/A	66.7% county (2000); 67.2% city (May 2001)
Adjacent Hotels?	Y, two with over 800 rooms	Y, Hyatt Regency (395 rooms)
Available Parking	Y	Y, across street
Number Parking Spaces	1,800 within, surrounding surface lots	989
Number Employees	30,000 hospitality industry	50,000 city

2.8 Regional Convention Center Perspective – Other Metropolitan Areas with Two Urban Centers

The Buffalo-Niagara region is different from most of the other market areas that are typical competitors (e.g., Milwaukee, Columbus, Providence, Rochester, Syracuse) in that it contains two separate and distinct urban centers that compete for local and regional trade shows, meetings, and conferences. Buffalo and Niagara Falls each have convention center facilities that directly compete with each other and also against the competing facilities noted above. Although this increases local and regional competition, it can also provide an opportunity for the region to focus its efforts and resources and provide facilities that complement rather than compete against each other.

In order to take advantage of the region's opportunities, it is important to examine how other metropolitan regions with two dis-

tinct urban centers provide for convention center facilities in a more coordinated manner. The EIS evaluated several relevant metro areas, presented below.

Minnesota: Minneapolis and St. Paul

Each city has its own convention center managed by independent entities. The larger convention center, in Minneapolis, attracts national conventions and exhibits, and St. Paul's River Centre primarily attracts regional, mid-sized conventions, large meetings, banquets, and smaller gatherings. Table 2-19 compares these centers.

Table 2-19 Comparison of Minneapolis Convention Center to St. Paul Convention Center

	Minneapolis	St. Paul
Population	382,618	287,151
Convention Center?	Yes	Yes, River Centre
Manager	City of Minneapolis	St. Paul Arena Company
Bookings	Greater Minneapolis CVA	St. Paul CVB
Total Square Ft.	300,000	169,000
Available Parking	N/A	1,800 across, 430 within
Adjacent Hotel?	Yes	No (connection being built)
No. hotel rooms	5,000 downtown, 3,700 adjacent	Over 2,000; (across street is 208)
No. Conventions	385 (1999)	131 (2000)
No. Attendees	454,000 (1999)	88,400 (2000)
Downtown Employees	145,000	N/A
Notes	Newly expanded	New

The Minneapolis Convention Center is managed by the City of Minneapolis. The approximately 300,000-square foot convention center hosted 385 events with 454,000 attendees in 1999. There are 5,000 downtown hotel rooms within walking distance of the MCC, with 3,700 rooms connected to the convention center and to other buildings by an enclosed skyway system. The City of Minneapolis has 275 restaurants, 145,000 workers, and 25,000 residents. Future development projects include renovations to include a retail and entertainment complex with a luxury hotel, movie theater and retail and dining. Other projects include development of a heritage center in 2002, as well as construction of a new museum.

The St. Paul Convention Center (River Centre) is managed by the St. Paul Arena Company. The new center is a convention, special event, and entertainment complex composed of three separate buildings that offer more than 169,000 gross square feet of con-

vention space (exhibit space, ballroom, and meeting rooms); an 18,000-seat arena; and a 5,500-seat auditorium. The convention center owns 1,800 parking spaces across the street and 430 underground. An additional 820 spaces will be available in a museum that is being constructed across the street.

Texas: Dallas and Fort Worth

The Dallas and Fort Worth Convention Centers are managed by two independent entities. The Dallas Convention Center is one of the premier meeting and exposition facilities in the country, attracting over 3,600 events annually. The Fort Worth convention center attracts a modest number of events and shows compared to its counterpart in Dallas and is currently undergoing expansion of its facilities. Table 2-20 provides a comparison of these convention centers.

Table 2-20 Comparison of Dallas Convention Center to Fort Worth Convention Center

	Dallas	Fort Worth
Population	1,052,000	504,350
Convention Center?	Yes	Yes
Manager	City of Dallas	City of Fort Worth
Bookings	Dallas CVB	Fort Worth CVB
Total Square Ft.	1,000,000 (2002)	340,000 (2003)
Available Parking	1270+ on-site/adjacent	1,200 on-site
Adjacent Hotel?	No, across/ on street	N
No. hotel rooms	58,000+ city	11,000 city; 2231 downtown
No. Events (2000)	3,600+ events	344 events; 35 national conventions
No. Attendees (2000)	3.8 million	1,124,003
Downtown Employees	122,000 hospitality jobs	N/A
Notes	Undergoing expansion	Undergoing expansion

The Dallas Convention Center (DCC) was called the Dallas Memorial Auditorium when it was built in 1957. It underwent expansions in 1973, 1984, and 1994. The DCC is managed by the City of Dallas and currently has 523,726 square feet same-level prime exhibit space, 225,000 square feet additional space, an arena that seats 9,000 people, a theater with 1,770 opera-style seats, and two ballrooms of 27,000 and 20,000 square feet. The new Dallas Light Rail train system has a station at the convention center.

Renovations and another expansion will be completed by summer 2002 and will include an additional 200,000-square feet of exhibition space (resulting in more than 800,000 square feet on the same

level). The DCC will offer 1,000,000 square feet of exhibition space, a new ballroom, and additional meeting rooms by 2002.

The DCC attracts 3.8 million convention visitors and secures $4.2 billion in revenues annually. There are 122,000 jobs related to the hospitality industry in the Dallas metro area and more than 58,000 hotel rooms.

The Fort Worth Convention Center is managed by the City of Fort Worth. The existing facility began its most recent expansion in 2000, with plans for use in 2002 and completion in 2003. The center will have 250,000 square feet of exhibit space (it currently has 171,000 square feet), 61,300 square feet of breakout rooms, 30,000 square feet of ballroom space, and a 14,000-seat arena (existing). There will also be 1,200 parking spaces on site. There are 11,000 hotel rooms in Fort Worth, with 2,231 located in the downtown area.

Conventions booked through the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau generated approximately 160,000 hotel room nights in 2000 (Thiel 2001).

Washington: Seattle and Tacoma

Seattle and Tacoma's convention centers are managed separately. The Washington State Convention and Trade Center (in Seattle) attracts mid-sized national and regional conventions and consumer shows, while the Tacoma Convention Center attracts smaller and medium groups, city-wide events, and a limited number of national conventions. A new convention center (the Greater Tacoma Convention Center) is under construction and scheduled for completion in 2003. Table 2-21 compares these convention centers.

Table 2-21 Comparison of Seattle Convention Center to Tacoma Convention Center

	Seattle	Tacoma
Population	563,374	193,556
Convention Center?	Y	Y
Manager	Washington State- governor-appointed board	Owned by City managed by Tacoma Sheraton
Bookings	Seattle King County CVB	Referrals by Tacoma-Pierce County CVB
Total Square Ft.	252,000	75,000 (with expansions)
Available Parking	1700, 990 new (2001 end)	Currently 600; more w/expansion
Adjacent Hotel?	N	Sheraton/ will expand (225 rms.)
No. hotel rooms	28,000 County-wide, 6,000 CBD	4,300

Table 2-21 Comparison of Seattle Convention Center to Tacoma Convention Center

	Seattle	Tacoma
No. Events (2000)	371 total events, 34 national Conventions	N/A
No. Attendees (2000)	398,960	N/A
Downtown Employees	130,000	N/A
Notes	Undergoing expansion	Undergoing expansion, future management unknown

A governor-appointed board manages the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, which is located in the heart of Seattle's downtown. The center's current expansion project, to be completed by the end of this year, will offer 54 meeting rooms, 207,000 square feet of dedicated exhibit space (currently 102,000 square feet), 45,000 square feet of ballroom space, and 990 new parking spaces (1,700 existing). Last year, 371 events (34 of which were national conventions) were held at the center. King County offers 28,000 hotel rooms, with 6,000 within walking distance of the convention center.

The BiCentennial Pavilion (the Tacoma convention center) is owned by the City of Tacoma and managed by the Tacoma Sheraton hotel. The center and available hotel meeting space (14,000 square feet combined) are located in the heart of the central business district. A new center (The Greater Tacoma Convention Center) is currently being constructed and is slated for completion in 2003. It will offer 75,000 square feet of convention space, while the hotel will undergo expansion and will be used as auxiliary meeting space. Management of the new center is yet to be determined.

California: San Francisco and Oakland

The San Francisco Moscone Center and the Oakland Convention Center are managed independently. The Moscone Center is currently being expanded and attracts national venues, while the Oakland Convention Center primarily focuses on smaller local/regional events. Table 2-22 compares these two convention centers.

Table 2-22 Comparison of San Francisco Convention Center to Oakland Convention Center

	San Francisco	Oakland
Population	723,959	380,000
Convention Center?	Yes, the Moscone Center	Yes
Manager	SMG	Oakland Marriott, owned by City
Bookings	San Francisco CVB	Oakland CVB refers
Total Square Ft.	900,000 (2003)	Convention plus hotel space: 89,000 max.
Available Parking	N/A	Yes, 200, some nearby
Adjacent Hotel?	No	Yes, Marriott
No. hotel rooms	30,500	479 Marriott, 7,000 Oakland
No. Events (2000)	86	N/A
No. Attendees (2000)	900,000	N/A
Notes	Undergoing expansion	No expansion plans

San Francisco's Moscone Center is managed by SMG, a private company that specializes in convention center and stadium management. The center is San Francisco's premier convention venue, with 600,000 square feet of exhibition space and an additional freestanding expansion of 300,000 square feet planned for 2003. The center hosted 86 convention events last year, with a total event attendance of 900,000. There are 30,500 hotel rooms within a three-block radius of the Moscone Center.

The Oakland Convention Center (OCC) is considerably smaller than San Francisco's Moscone Center. While the City of Oakland owns the center, the Oakland Marriott City Center manages the OCC. For large events, the Oakland Marriott and convention center combines available space for a total of 89,000 total square feet of space. The center attracts local, regional, and some smaller national events, but does not compete directly with the Moscone Center, which will offer 900,000-square feet of space by 2003.

Florida: Tampa and St. Petersburg

The Tampa Convention Center and St. Petersburg's Bayfront Center are managed independently. The two centers attract different events and groups, as the Tampa Convention Center focuses on medium- and large-sized conventions, trade shows, and events and the Bayfront Center focuses primarily on the performing arts and small conventions and meetings. Table 2-23 compares these two convention centers.

Table 2-23 Comparison of Tampa Bay Convention Center to St. Petersburg Convention Center

	Tampa Bay	St. Petersburg
Population	303,447	248,232
Convention Center?	Yes , the Tampa CC	Yes, the Bayfront Center
Manager	City of Tampa Bay	City of St. Petersburg
Bookings	Tampa Bay CVB	Management
Total Square Ft.	600,000	231,000
Available Parking	N/A	N/A
Adjacent Hotel?	Yes, Marriott (717 rooms)	No
No. hotel rooms	18,000 Tampa Bay, 1800 within 4 miles	3 hotels within 6 blocks
No. Events (2000)	N/A	N/A
No. Attendees (2000)	570,000	N/A
Notes	Plans to expand breakout space	No expansion plans

The waterfront Tampa Convention Center is owned and managed by the City of Tampa. The center offers 600,000 square feet of space with 200,000 square feet of exhibition space and a 36,000-square feet ballroom. The center attracts about 570,000 visitors annually to its various national and regional events and trade shows and intends to double its available breakout room space. The convention center is attached to the 717-room Marriott and there are 1,800 commitable hotel rooms within a 4-mile radius. The Tampa Bay area has 18,000 hotel rooms with 65.4% occupancy in 1999. Last year, 13.47 million non-business visitors spent $2.23 billion in Tampa Bay.

The Bayfront Center is owned and managed by the City of St. Petersburg. It is the only performing arts and convention center in the Tampa Bay area and offers 231,000-square feet of space. The Bayfront Center serves the entire Tampa Bay area and houses a number of sports, entertainment, meeting, and dining events. It also offers 23,500 square feet of exhibit space within its Times Bayfront Arena and maintains an active convention and trade show schedule. There are three hotels located within six blocks of the center.

2.9 Compatibility with Other Local and Regional Planning Efforts

Over the last five years, substantial effort has been put forward by local government agencies and concerned citizens in the Buffalo area to evaluate not only the performance of the Buffalo Convention Center but also overall economic conditions in downtown Buffalo. These efforts have included a series of downtown workshops and summits to develop strategies to prioritize and implement a wide range of downtown projects and the completion of a strategic

plan for downtown Buffalo. Other studies looking at improving economic, traffic, and parking conditions have also been prepared during this time period.

These initiatives are further described in Section 4 and analyzed with regard to impacts; however, it is important when evaluating the purpose and need for a new Buffalo convention center to determine whether the project will be compatible and consistent with other local and regional planning and development efforts. While it is important for the region to realize the tangible and intangible beneficial impacts associated with a state-of-the-art convention center, it is equally important to ensure that it does not preclude, preempt, or adversely affect the purpose and need of other important projects and initiatives.

The downtown Buffalo planning and development efforts, all of which are targeted toward revitalization of the city, are listed in Table 2-24 and are summarized in Section 4.1 of this Draft EIS.

Table 2-24 Other Local and Regional Planning Efforts

Date	Plan/Ordinance	Focus of Plan
1987	Buffalo Zoning Ordinance (Revision)	To promote and expand upon existing downtown revitalization activities (particularly residential) by revising zoning districts
1999	Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan	Specific recommendations for Downtown housing and economic development
Present	City of Buffalo Draft Comprehensive Plan	Lays out the City's goals, objectives, policies, and action steps to revitalize the City of Buffalo
March 2001	R/UDAT	Conceptual strategies for residential development within urban core, including sites adjacent to the Mohawk site
February 2001	Buffalo Place Inc.	Reports on downtown trends, including a pedestrian study and a report on downtown business and employment trends
Ongoing	Downtown 2002!	Ongoing implementation campaign focused on revitalization of downtown Buffalo

Overall, these plans and initiatives all call for the revitalization of downtown Buffalo, with the focus on a mix of new housing, commercial, retail, and office space. The main focus is the desire to increase the available housing units within the downtown area, however, both the Downtown Strategic Plan and the Draft Comprehensive Plan include the goal of constructing a new convention center. The construction of a new convention center would be expected to generate development of new hotels, restaurants, and entertainment and cultural uses within the downtown area.

Overall, a new convention center appears to be compatible with the local initiatives for the downtown Buffalo area. However, the convention center plans should be developed in a way that ensures no other revitalization goals are precluded due to its construction, particularly the new housing initiatives in the downtown area. Construction of a convention center would preclude or hinder potential redevelopment of buildings adjacent to or within the Mohawk Site, particularly the Holling Press Building and an area identified for potential residential development adjacent to Lafayette Square by R/UDAT. Adequate parking must also be provided to meet the needs of any events that would not displace any commuter or resident vehicles. Therefore, careful consideration of the location, design, and layout for a new convention center are essential and should complement existing architectural assets, build upon existing radials, and enhance the connection between the Central Business District and the East Side.

3 Analysis of Alternatives

The analysis of project alternatives is a critical part of the SEQR process. In order for the Lead Agency (Erie County), the public, and other interested and involved agencies to make an informed decision, a comprehensive analysis of viable alternatives needs to be provided.

This section begins with a discussion of key criteria (i.e., guidelines) for the successful siting, design, and construction of a state-of-the-art convention center. This section then discusses the three main alternative site locations and other sites identified during the scoping process. Also addressed are alternative size facilities, alternative uses for the funding, and the No-Action Alternative. Potential reuses of the existing Convention Center, including demolition, are identified and discussed.

Finally, a regional decision-making alternative is proposed whereby Erie County may involve other local, regional, and state agencies and entities into the decision-making process with the intent of incorporating a regional perspective on siting, designing, constructing, operating, and marketing one or more state-of-the-art convention center facilities to better serve the western New York region.

3.1 Program Criteria for Site Selection

In order to analyze potential sites for a new or expanded convention center in Buffalo, several critical program criteria have been identified because they are particularly relevant to the ability of an identified site to support the project, as proposed. These criteria are not site-specific, but rather are critical to the efficient and effective layout and design of a state-of-the-art convention center. If these general criteria cannot be satisfied, then it does not matter how good a particular location is.

Not only are these criteria used to characterize and evaluate potential sites, they should also be followed in the subsequent detailed design of a convention center facility to be undertaken once the SEQR process is complete and a site has been selected by Erie County, the Lead Agency.

The following criteria were developed by HNTB Corporation, an internationally recognized firm specializing in convention center planning and design (HNTB 2000):

- **Loading Docks**. For a convention center with 125,000 square feet of exhibition space, the industry standard would require 12 to 13 loading docks for full-size (i.e., 65 feet long) semi-tractor trailers, based on a criteria of one dock for each 10,000 square feet of exhibit space. It is recommended that two or three of these docks be designated to accommodate food service deliveries and trash operations. The long-term plans for recycling policy and programs in the County should also be considered in evaluating the total number of docks to be accommodated.

- **Truck Operations**. Transportation of exhibitions to and from a building of this size requires careful planning and coordination of truck access. Not all deliveries can take place at the same time, therefore an on- or off-site truck staging area must be made available for trucks before they are allowed to access the loading dock position they are assigned. All paths of travel between the staging areas, surrounding streets, and the loading docks will need to be designed to accommodate the large rigs that service the exhibition industry, therefore horizontal and vertical geometry will be important planning considerations.

- **Public Vehicular Circulation**. Even with a nearby headquarters hotel, the convention center will need to be supported by hotels that are not necessarily within walking distance. Therefore the successful site must be able to accommodate safe and functional front-of-house bus, shuttle, and taxi operations to serve attendees.

- **Multiple Events**. Given the market focus of this project, it is anticipated that there will be numerous occasions when more than one event is taking place in the building. Therefore the viable site(s) should be able to support a building organization that can accommodate multiple building entries and a distribution of the functional spaces that allows more than one event in the building at the same time.

- **Prefunction Space**. The lobbies, registration, and circulation space serve as the critical connective tissue of the center. It is in these spaces that natural light and visibility to and from the building can best be achieved. The successful site(s) will be able to accommodate a building organization whose prefunction space can best take advantage of views to and from the building. Prefunction space must be adequately sized to support registration, queuing, circulation, receptions, and other types of these uses.

- **Exhibition Hall**. The entire exhibition hall must be on a single level, in a rectangular shape, and ideally dimensioned horizontally on a 30-foot module. Its clear height should be 30 feet to the underside of structure/lighting/HVAC. Future expansion exhibition area should be on the same level as the original hall. A 350-pound live load will have to be accommodated.

- **Ballroom**. The ballroom must be column-free, and of generous vertical height so that large-scale audio-visual productions can be made. Access to the ballroom should take into consideration that it would be used at times for community events when the rest of the building is not leased or in use. Proximity of the ballroom to the main production kitchen and properly-sized service corridors on its perimeter are critical to food service operations. The number of divisions of the ballroom into smaller meeting areas is a market-driven consideration, but at least three subdivisions using movable partitions should be planned.

- **Meeting Rooms**. Meeting rooms should be located to be easily accessible from the exhibition hall and ballroom. Groupings should also allow for multiple simultaneous events that do not conflict with each other. A variety of sizes of meeting rooms should make up the program area of 25,000 to 30,000 square feet; a nominal sizing could be groupings of 1,200 to 1,800-square feet spaces that are combined using movable partitions into groups of two and three to provide flexibility. All meeting rooms should be proportioned not to exceed a 2:1 length-to-width ratio and ceiling heights should be a minimum of 16 feet to allow for audio-visual presentations.

- **Structural Considerations – Exhibition Hall**. The convention center will have a variety of types of spaces whose vertical and horizontal dimensions demand varying structural spanning solutions. It is desirable that the exhibition hall be column-

free, but this is not imperative. In no case should any columns be closer than 90 feet apart. The key advantage of a column-free exhibition hall is not for exhibits but for its flexible use as a multi-media presentation environment where sight lines to a stage are critical.

- **Structural Considerations – Ballroom**. It is essential that the ballroom be column-free because of the constant use of this space as a presentation environment. This means that the viable site(s) should be able to accommodate a diagram with a column-free footprint for the ballroom of approximately 150 feet by 200 feet to achieve a 30,000-square feet open footprint.

- **Food Service Operations**. The main kitchen must be well-placed with respect to the ballroom and meeting rooms, food service loading docks, and back-of-house service corridors. It should also be possible to provide food service to the exhibition hall when it is used for extra-large banquets and other events.

- **Technology**. The entire building should be wired with a fiber-optic backbone to provide high-speed internet service to the exhibition hall floor, the ballroom, all meeting rooms, prefunction space, as well as key support spaces such as the kitchen, administrative suite, etc. Roof space should be reserved for satellite dish positions for down- and up-link capabilities, with consideration given to line-of-sight access to the appropriate satellite positions. Provisions for wireless communications should be made, but this technology will not replace the need to hard-wire the facility.

- **Open Space**. There is no specific amount of open space that the building program will typically require, but it is expected that the project will require some in order to solve urban design goals, setback requirements, and vehicular circulation solutions. Some open space, possibility in the form of decks or balconies adjacent to the building's prefunction areas may be architectural in nature.

- **Expansion**. The previously completed market study described an expansion scenario for the project that ranged from 75,000 to 150,000 square feet of additional space. It is critical that the selected site be able to accommodate future expansion. The history of the convention center industry has shown that most buildings have expanded from original construction di-

mensions. Projects that were intelligently planned with expansion in mind were able to do so in a functional and cost-effective manner. At a minimum, an overall site plan showing the expansion strategy must be made a part of the initial design commission for the project.

- **Parking**. It is important that on-site parking be provided, particularly because of the need to market the facility during winter months. On-site parking is typically a major factor in selection of a convention center to hold an event because of the convenience it provides and the ability of attendees to park and enter/exit the facility without being exposed to inclement weather. This is, in fact, one of the main drawbacks to marketing the existing Buffalo Convention Center. According to Convention Center management, approximately 24 events (12 consumer shows and 12 trade shows) have declined to select Buffalo due to the unavailability of on-site parking (Florczak 2000).

Occupancy

Occupancy of the convention center is driven by several factors: 1) marketing success in attracting events, including such factors as available hotel rooms; 2) an individual event's success in attracting attendees; 3) size constraints of the building and its rooms as determined by code and fire marshal regulations.

For planning purposes, potential occupancy of the key leaseable spaces can be calculated as shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 Key Leaseable Spaces

	Program Area (sf)	Reception 7 sf/person	Theater Seating 10 sf/person	Dining/ Banquet 15 sf/person	Exhibit 25 sf/person
Exhibition Hall	125,000	N/A	12,500	8,333	5,000
Ballroom	30,000	4,286	3,000	2,000	1,200
Meeting Rooms	30,000	4,286	3,000	2,000	N/A

Source: HNTB, 2000.

It should be stressed that these are theoretical maximums, especially with respect to the exhibition hall. It is unlikely, for instance, that the entire hall would be used for a single large plenary meeting or banquet. A more plausible scenario is that, for instance, 50,000 square feet of the exhibition hall would be used for an occasional banquet that could not otherwise fit in the ballroom. Determining the total occupancy of the building should not be calculated by simple addition of the figures above because it is highly unlikely that all of the leaseable spaces would be occupied to maximum density at the same time. The ultimate allowable maximum occupancy of each space in the convention center is subject to final design and review by code and fire department officials.

3.2 Mohawk Site (Preferred Site)

3.2.1 Description

The Mohawk Site alternative involves construction a new 400,000 to 425,000 gross square foot convention center with a 125,000 square foot main exhibit hall on an 11-acre site in downtown Buffalo, New York (see Figure 3-1). Also included as a component of this alternative is the potential to construct a headquarters-quality hotel within or adjacent to the selected project site as well as construction of a minimum 1,250-space parking facility.

Construction of a new convention center at the Mohawk Site would potentially involve some or all of the following activities:

- Acquisition of up to 55 land parcels within the project area for redevelopment;
- Relocation of up to 30 existing businesses;
- Demolition of up to 30 structures within the project site;
- Environmental investigation and potential remediation of several properties; and
- Construction of new public infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, sewer) supporting site redevelopment

3.2.2 Opportunities and Constraints

As part of the process of collecting and reviewing data concerning the candidate sites for the convention center project, the EIS evaluation team reviewed the Site Selection Study prepared in 1998 for the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (Cannon 1998). This report concluded that the preferred site for

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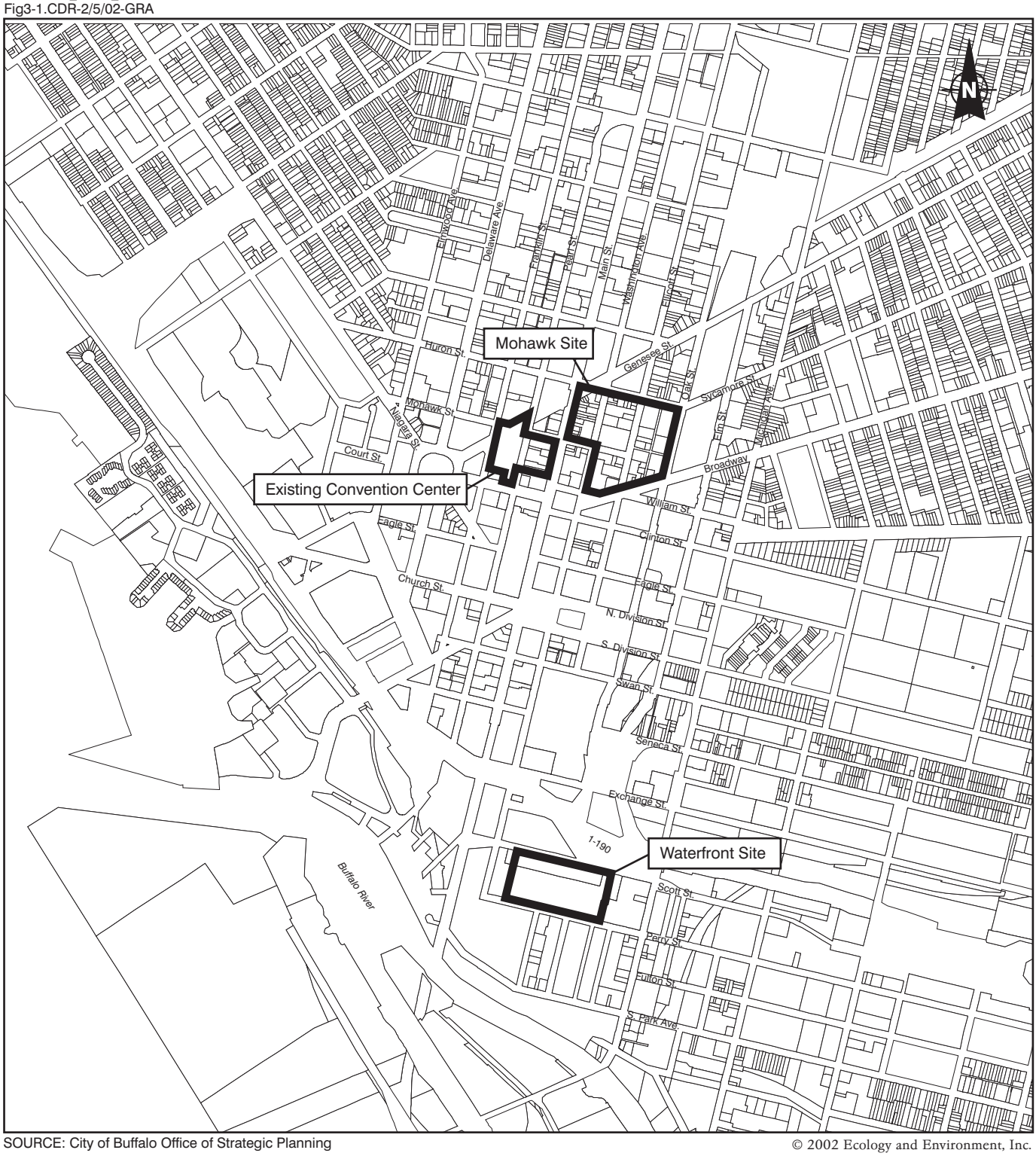

SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

SCALE
0 500 1000 Feet

Figure 3-1 NEW BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER EIS SITE ALTERNATIVES

the project was the Mohawk site along Washington Street between Broadway, Huron Street, and Blossom Alley, with air-rights construction above Ellicott Street. The EIS team agrees with the conclusion that this area in downtown Buffalo would be a good location for the project, but recommends that the Mohawk site be enlarged to properly accommodate the size of convention center as previously proposed. Based on the proposed development program for the project, convention center industry standards, and the particular constraints and opportunities of this site, there are several key issues that should be identified in further consideration of this site's potential for the project. While the concept diagrams presented in the 1998 site selection report do not represent specific design proposals, the following issues will have to be addressed if planning for this project were to move forward at this location. Each of the comments below will have an effect on the horizontal dimensioning of the project and therefore on the ability of this site to support the proposed building program.

Urban Design Context

The positioning of the convention center's front-of-house lobby and prefunction area along Washington Street is basically a sound strategy. However, with the main floor of the building raised in order to clear Ellicott Street, it will be particularly difficult to achieve an active street edge at grade. Including retail within the convention center is not likely to prove viable because of access and visibility issues. Activation of the Washington Street edge of the project will remain an important design objective.

The convention center should have as strong a sense of presence on Main Street as possible. The location of the ballroom at the public square where Genesee and Huron Streets intersect would help to achieve this objective. However, the study team suggests that the Genesee diagonal be reflected in the design of the public square, rather then letting an orthogonal character dominate. Consideration should be given to the possibility of a major entrance along the Mohawk Street axis.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Area

Because Washington Street is a one-way street in the southerly direction, the convention center curb is on the left side of vehicles stopping at the building's face. This is potentially dangerous and is not recommended. Further consideration can be given to using Broadway for pick-up and drop-off functions that should use the right-hand curb.

It should be noted that the City of Buffalo is currently proposing to return Washington Street to a two-way street. If this plan is implemented as planned, Washington Street will become a two-way street by October 2002, and this issue will not be as critical.

Ballroom

The ballroom as diagrammed in the 1998 Site Selection Study is not conducive to effectively supporting presentations due to its narrow proportions. Given the frequency of audio-visual presentations that will take place in this space, the length-to-width ratio should not exceed 2:1. This deficiency would be corrected by extending the facility (i.e., expanding the footprint) to the east from Blossom Alley to Oak Street.

Ballroom Service Corridor

While placement of the ballroom directly adjacent to the exhibition hall as proposed in the 1998 Site Selection Study may offer an opportunity to use the ballroom for overflow exhibition use, we believe this is not a desirable option, for several reasons. First, acoustic isolation of these spaces is critical so that the ballroom can be used for functions when there are noise generators in the exhibition hall, either because of an active event, or exhibition set-up and tear-down activities. Second, the ballroom requires a service corridor along its long dimension in order to properly support food service functions in the space, whether in its open or divided mode. This deficiency could be corrected by extending the facility (i.e., expanding the footprint) to the east from Blossom Alley to Oak Street.

Meeting Rooms

The 1998 Site Selection Study and section diagrams reviewed by the EIS study team do not indicate where the 25,000 to 30,000 square feet of meeting space would be located. This portion of the program, along with the supporting service and support areas, is large enough to directly affect the assessment of whether the project can fit on this site.

Future Expansion

The building program resulting from the marketing study indicated a range of 75,000 to150,000 square feet of additional space as a planning objective. The Test Fit diagram presented in the 1998 study (Cannon 1998) identifies the low end of that range, 75,000 square feet, along the southern end of the site at Broadway. Because of the diagonal geometry of the street grid, the effective size of an expansion may be less than indicated. In addition, the

site geometry makes it difficult to have the service court and loading docks serve this expansion area.

While it is possible that this deficiency could be corrected by extending the facility (i.e., expanding the footprint) to the east from Blossom Alley to Oak Street, the shape of this parcel will compromise the efficient utilization of the site.

Another factor that could affect the feasibility of expanding the proposed facility to the south towards Broadway Avenue is that this area has been identified for potential downtown housing by the R/UDAT and the City of Buffalo. (See Section 4, Environmental Setting and Impacts, of this DEIS.)

Prefunction Space

The width of prefunction space shown on the plan diagram generated from the 1998 Site Selection Study (Cannon 1998) is inadequate, especially along the north face of the ballroom. For a ballroom of 30,000 square feet, there should be approximately 10,000 square feet of prefunction space whose dimensions adequately support the flow and queuing conditions of event attendees. A ballroom of this size can support a banquet of up to 2,000 people and about 3,000 seated theater-style for a plenary meeting or presentation.

The exhibition hall's prefunction area on the exhibition hall level should be wider than that on the street level. Achieving a volumetric atrium with an upper level setback as shown on the building section diagram conflicts with the programmatic requirement for prefunction space.

Service and Support Space

The diagrams presented in the 1998 Site Selection Study (Cannon 1998) do not indicate service and support areas in sufficient detail. For an air-rights convention center with its main occupied areas above the street level, these will require an even greater area than in an at-grade facility. Storage, shops, administration, exit stairways, and building systems will be part of these types of spaces.

3.2.3 Conclusions

In considering the cumulative effect of the comments above, the EIS team believes that the site, as defined in the 1998 Site Selection Study as the Mohawk Site, is too narrow in the east-west dimension to properly accommodate this building program in a functional manner. Therefore, it is recommended that if the center is to be located here, its eastern boundary be extended from Blos-

som Alley to Oak Street. Widening the site this half-block width will provide the opportunity to respond to the challenges cited above while providing for more successful long-term expansion strategies.

The project would also require modifying the existing traffic patterns surrounding the site, including reopening of a portion of Mohawk Street between Pearl and Washington Streets, and closing the portion of Mohawk Street between Washington and Ellicott Streets. Certain streets in the area may also need to be redesigned to become one way. Ellicott Street would run beneath an elevated portion of the new convention center. Specific traffic patterns and changes will be identified during final design once the entrances and exits of the proposed convention center are determined and the location of the on-site parking and hotel are identified.

As addressed in Section 4.1, Land Use, development of the Mohawk Site for a new convention center may preclude a proposed housing project in the Holling Press Building and may influence development of sites nearby for housing, as proposed by the R/UDAT.

In addition, construction of a new convention center within this project location would require the demolition of potentially significant historic structures. Based on a review of the Phase IA Report and a site visit, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau (SHPO) has determined that four structures on the site are listed or eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places, and an additional eight structures are contributing to the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District (see Appendix B).

The SHPO has determined that there is a potential for significant archeological resources at the Mohawk Site, and that a Phase IB Investigation is warranted.

To date the physical design of the new convention center has not been initiated and current ideas and identified design modifications are conceptual. At this site, it is assumed that the headquarters hotel would be located in the renovated Niagara Mohawk building located directly adjacent to the Mohawk site. Based on the results of the Traffic and Parking Study (see Appendix D), it is assumed that 1,250 parking spaces would need to be provided.

3.3 Waterfront Site

3.3.1 Description

The Waterfront Site alternative involves construction of a new 400,000 to 425,000 gross square foot convention center with a 125,000 square foot main exhibit hall on a 10.4-acre site in downtown Buffalo, New York (see Figure 3-1). Also included in this alternative is the potential to accommodate a headquarters-quality hotel within or adjacent to the project site as well as construction of a minimum 1,250-space parking facility.

The site is currently used for parking, and there are no structures or buildings on site.

Construction of a new convention center at the Waterfront Site would involve the following activities:

- Acquisition of land used by HSBC and *The Buffalo News*; and

- Construction of new public infrastructure (e.g., access roads, water, and sewer) supporting site redevelopment.

3.3.2 Opportunities and Constraints

The site near the lakefront, east of the HSBC Atrium Building, may be appealing as a potential convention center site because it is not occupied by buildings and would not preclude the development of the site for housing. However, this site is significantly deficient because of its distance from hotels and other visitor amenities and entertainment centers (e.g., the Theatre District, the Chippewa District). The site is physically and visually isolated from the downtown and entertainment areas. It would be more difficult to successfully market a convention center aimed at meetings, trade shows, and conventions at this location than at the Mohawk Site.

In addition, the site is currently used for HSBC employee parking and for trucks serving *The Buffalo News*—both critical uses for these significant businesses. The HSBC Bank, the City of Buffalo's largest private employer, regards this site as a critical expansion site for its operations in Buffalo (Keating 2001), and, as such, development of this site as a convention center would preclude future commercial or office development of this site. Compared to the Mohawk Site, this location has inferior mass transit and highway access that would facilitate easy truck access. Since no standing buildings exist on this site, the SHPO has determined that no structures listed and/or eligible for state or National Register Listings will be affected. However, the potential for significant

archeological resources is a concern and Phase IB Investigations are warranted.

3.3.3 Conclusions

Based on the constraints inherent with this site, this alternative has significant flaws for the location and operation of a new convention center, of any size, which makes selection of this location not recommended.

3.4 Expansion of Existing Convention Center

3.4.1 Description

This alternative includes expansion of the existing convention center to 400,000 square feet from its present 180,000 square feet to accommodate larger conventions. The existing convention center is described in Section 1 of this Draft EIS.

This alternative would require an expansion of the existing center east across Pearl Street and include acquisition and renovation of up to eight parcels of land on Main Street. Expansion of the existing convention center would potentially involve some or all of the following activities:

- Acquisition of seven land parcels within the project area for redevelopment;
- Relocation of six existing businesses (Source: Buffalo Place, Inc.);
- Construction of new public infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, and sewer) supporting site redevelopment.

3.4.2 Opportunities and Constraints

The alternative considered involves the eastward expansion of the existing center from Pearl Street to Main Street between Mohawk and Court streets (see Figure 3-1). In principle, this approach offers the following advantages:

- Reuse of existing facilities and public resources;
- An improved opportunity to connect to the Hyatt Hotel;
- Improved connection of the project to Main Street;
- The southeast corner of the site addresses Lafayette Square;
- Avoidance of historic preservation constraints; and

- Eliminates need to develop alternative uses of the existing Convention Center.

Despite the good general location of the project in this portion of downtown and these specific advantages, an expansion of the existing center cannot satisfy the marketing and program objectives that have been identified to date. The most significant problems concern the nature of the exhibition hall and truck access to it.

Exhibit Hall

Additional exhibition space built above Pearl Street will have to be higher than the existing hall in order to allow traffic to continue to flow along Pearl Street. Therefore, such an approach would result in approximately 63,000 square feet of existing exhibition space at the current level, and approximately 62,000 square feet of new exhibition space at a level approximately 10 to 15 feet higher.

While it may be possible to design this alternative so that the upper level exhibition area overlooks the lower exhibition level, thereby achieving some visual continuity, a split-level exhibition hall is not desirable and would actually be a distinctly negative liability in Buffalo's attempt to compete with other cities for convention and exhibition business. A split-level exhibit hall would not be easily marketable to single events that want to use the whole hall at once. There would always be a perception of inequality between the two portions of the hall and selling exhibit space to individual exhibitors would be more difficult than if it were at a single level. In addition, the site does not successfully accommodate a building plan with multiple entries serving each of the two exhibition levels, so the accommodation of two simultaneous events in the two-level exhibition hall would not work.

Truck Docks

An expansion of the existing convention center to the east would involve the complete removal of the loading docks from their existing location on Pearl Street. The most logical new location for docks would be along the north side of the site at Mohawk Street because access from Court Street is more constrained. However, with the split-level exhibit hall, truck access to the loading dock would have to be at two levels, and there is not adequate horizontal dimension to accommodate both the necessary ramps and truck turn-around areas. Truck access to this expanded facility would also likely result in increased truck traffic across the Main Street pedestrian mall, which may adversely influence pedestrian circulation. The truck access problem is further exacerbated by the re-

quirement to provide direct drive-on truck access to both levels of the exhibition floor, which does not appear possible given the geometrical constraints of providing for semi-tractor trailer truck operations.

3.4.3 Conclusions

Because it is not possible to effectively expand the existing center in a manner that results in a single-level exhibition hall served by approximately 12 truck docks and drive-on capability, this alternative is not recommended for consideration as a location for the convention center project

3.5 Alternative Convention Center Sites

During the scoping process for this EIS, the County solicited citizen and agency input to identify alternative sites to be considered for a new Buffalo convention center in addition to those identified as part of the proposed action. During this process the following sites were identified as sites to be considered in the EIS evaluation.

3.5.1 Niagara Street Site Alternative

This triangular site bounded by Niagara Street, Huron Street, and Elmwood Avenue was recommended during Public Scoping because of its large number of underutilized buildings, its accessibility, and its docking capability (see Figure 3-2). The site was subsequently reviewed based on the criteria identified above, the County of Erie request for proposals, and the 1998 Site Selection Study. Based on a standard set of criteria, which included public, service, and parking access, existing hotel adjacency or new hotel opportunity, and site size, availability, and marketability, the site was deemed infeasible. The Niagara Street site is irregularly shaped, which would not allow for an effective and efficient layout and flow. The Niagara Street Site was also eliminated due to its size, which was determined to be inadequate, and its lack of potential for expansion. The site could not support a headquarters hotel and is not adjacent to existing downtown hotels.

Finally, the construction of a convention center on the Niagara Street site would preclude the potential for housing, which was specifically identified for this particular site by the recent R/UDAT. While speculative in nature, the R/UDAT strategy strongly recommends the development of housing in downtown Buffalo, and specifically recommends building on Joseph Ellicott's radial street pattern. The R/UDAT specifically identified three

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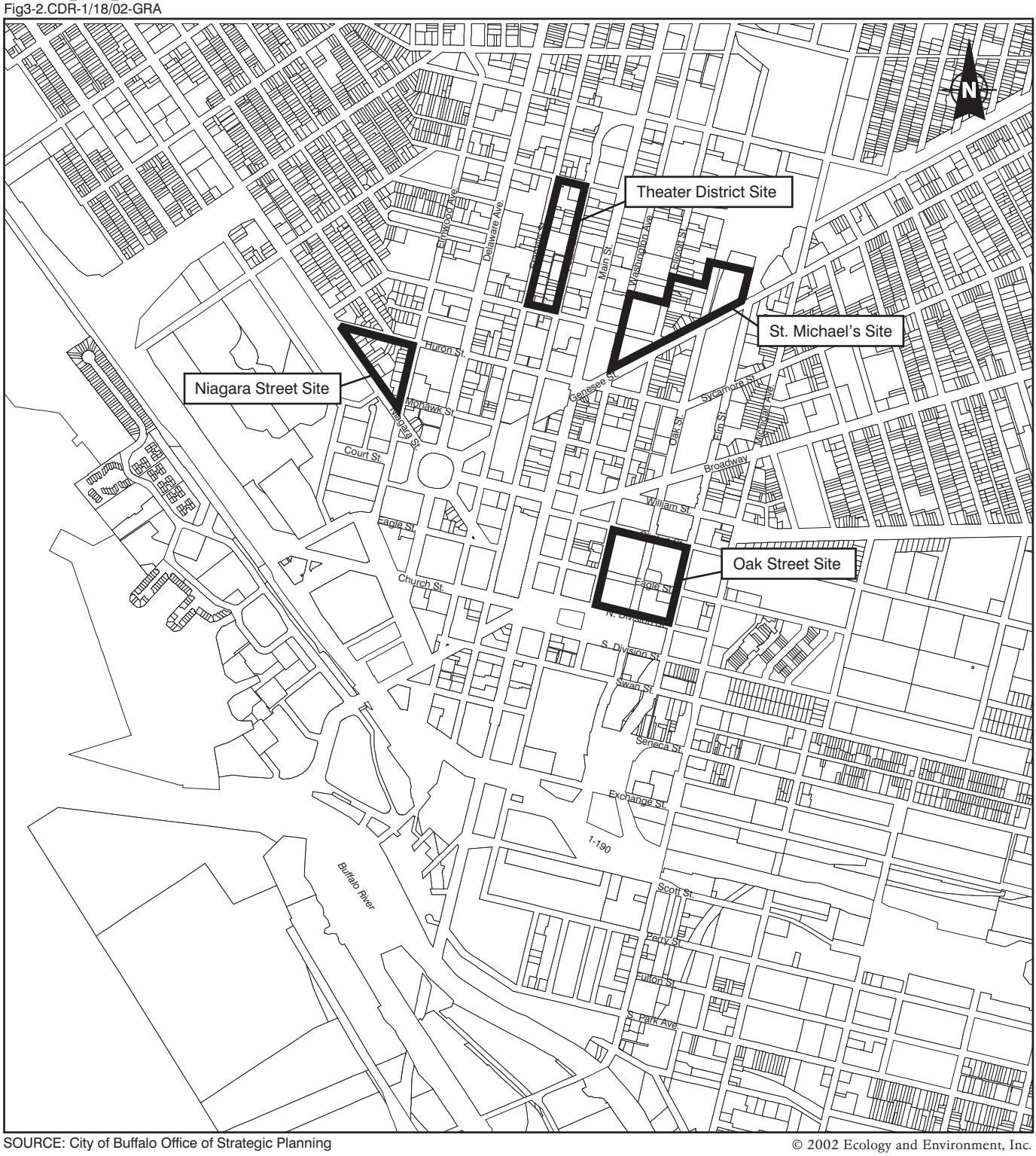

SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

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Figure 3-2 OTHER IDENTIFIED ALTERNATIVE SITES

sites in downtown Buffalo as fulfilling this objective. The Niagara Street site is included in these recommendations (see Figure 3-3 for site location and recommended design). In order to not preclude this opportunity to implement a specific R/UDAT recommendation, this site is not considered further as a potential site for a convention center.

3.5.2 Theater District Site Alternative

The site bounded by West Tupper, West Chippewa, Pearl, and Franklin streets (see Figure 3-2) was also identified during the public scoping process. The site was reviewed as a project alternative against the standard criteria for convention center construction and relevant development initiatives. Upon review, it was determined that the Theatre District site was too narrow and constrained to provide adequate pre-function and exhibit space and too narrow to provide for an effective and efficient layout for the proposed convention center. The narrow dimensions of the site would dictate that a convention center would be many stories high in order to provide the square footage proposed, and this is not an efficient and economical utilization of space in a convention center. In addition, the site lacks potential for expansion, adequate docking capabilities, and potential for a headquarters hotel.

3.5.3 Oak Street Site Alternative

A third site was recommended during the public scoping process and reviewed. While the site (see Figure 3-2) could potentially provide adequate square footage for a new convention center, the site was determined infeasible due to its location. The site is bounded by Clinton, Elm, North Division, and Ellicott streets. It crosses Oak Street, a major thoroughfare that connects New York State Route 33 to Interstate 190 and would require clearance of approximately 10 to 15 feet to accommodate existing traffic patterns. The resulting convention center complex would not be pedestrian-friendly, nor would it offer a single-level exhibition hall with safe and easy truck access. In addition, while the existing Lafayette Hotel is proximal to the site and a prime candidate for restoration, it is unlikely to have the features necessary for a headquarters designation.

3.5.4 St. Michael's Site

The City of Buffalo has completed a feasibility study for the redevelopment of downtown Buffalo. This study proposed several conceptual downtown redevelopment projects including a casino, a new convention center, the waterfront, the Memorial Auditorium, and other developments.

In particular, this study identified a new site for locating a potential new convention center. This site is located north of the Mohawk site and north of Genesee Street. The site is generally bounded by Genesee Street, Washington Street, Oak Street, Elm Street, and St. Michael's Street. Because conceptual design of this facility has not been conducted, nor has any market analysis or site investigation been completed, inclusion of this site in this EIS is premature.

It is clear from this study that redevelopment activities, as proposed, would depend entirely on revenues generated by casino gaming at a casino located in downtown Buffalo. The study identifies a location for a casino at a site located at Delaware Avenue and Chippewa Street.

Although the New York State Legislature has approved casino gaming legislation, the Seneca Nation has not yet voted to approve or deny casino gaming. Since it is unlikely that casino gaming in downtown Buffalo will be realized in the next 2 to 3 years, this site is not considered further in the EIS. If casino gaming is approved by the Seneca Nation and this site is recommended, the County may choose to include it for more detailed consideration in a supplemental EIS or other SEQR documentation.

3.6 Alternative Convention Center Size

Based on prior market studies and feasibility studies, the proposed facility size and requirements are as identified in Sections 1.1 and 1.3 of this DEIS. Based on the findings and conclusions of this DEIS regarding certain constraints at each of the identified sites, the lead agency may decide to evaluate the feasibility, viability, and cost of a smaller convention center facility.

If this course of action is determined acceptable, a new market study and economic feasibility and impact analysis will need to be conducted.

3.7 Alternative Uses of Funding

Many comments were received from the public questioning the wisdom of incurring the costs to construct a new convention center, headquarters hotel, and parking structure (currently estimated at a maximum of $235 million, or at approximately $173.1 to $198.9 million, netting out private funding for the hotel at the expense of other uses of the funds to promote economic development, small business assistance, downtown housing, and other uses.

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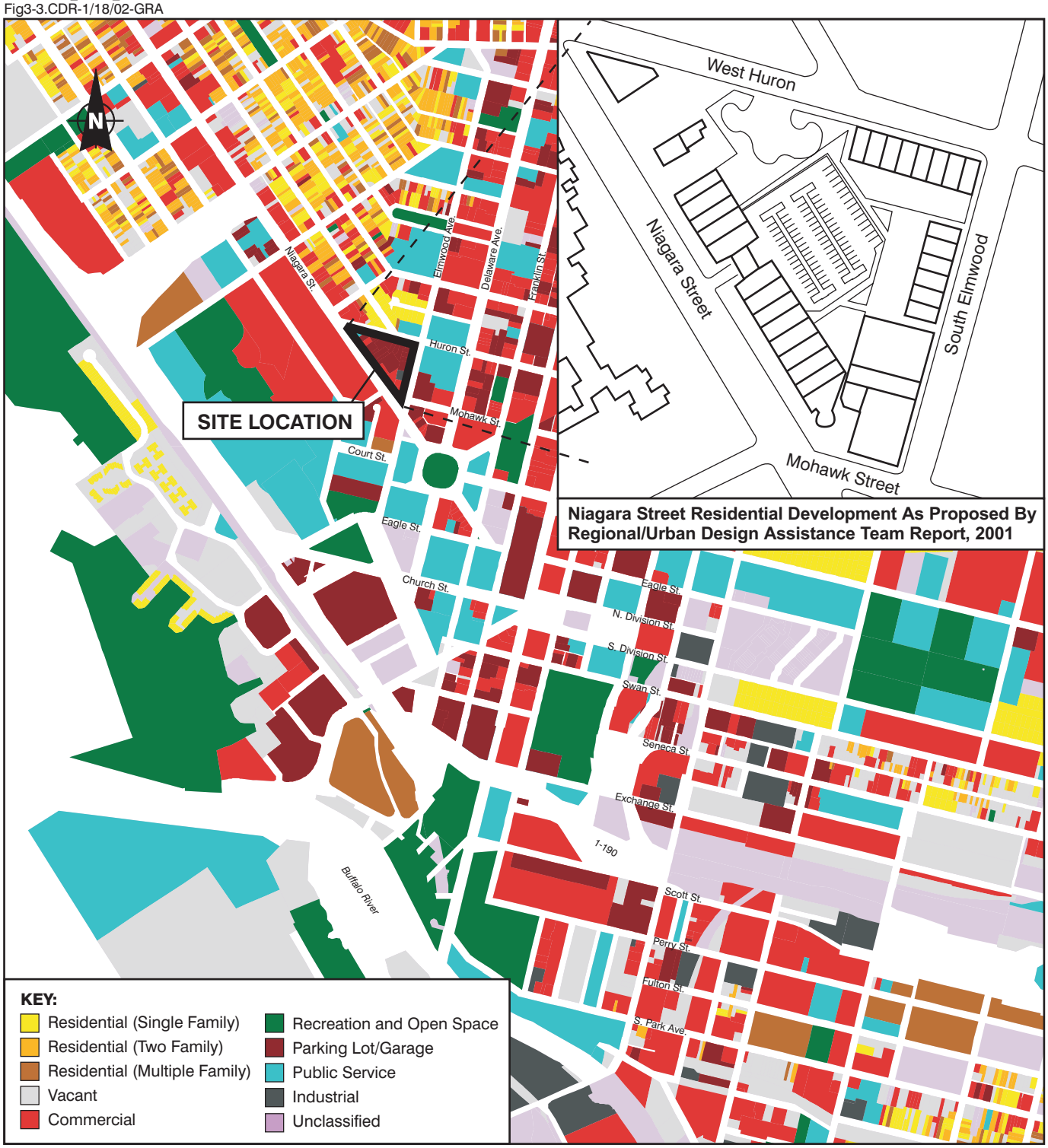

SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning and the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team Report, 2001

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Figure 3-3 NIAGARA STREET ALTERNATIVE

While it is possible that funds may become available from state, local, and private funding sources, including potential state and local proceeds of casino gaming at some point in the future, the likelihood of these funds being available is not definite, and at this point it is premature to assume that these funds would be prioritized, requested, and earmarked for a new convention center. Identifying, evaluating, and comparing hypothetical alternative ways to invest and use future available funds and the resultant beneficial impacts would be virtually unlimited. While other ways to use these future available funds could result in other beneficial economic impacts equal to or possibly greater than a convention center, there would be no way to implement the proposed action without this County investment or assistance from state, local, and private sources.

3.8 Alternatives for Existing Convention Center Reuse

Should the Mohawk or Waterfront sites be selected for construction of a new convention center, adaptive reuse of the existing convention center will be pursued. During the construction phase, the existing facility should be utilized for conventions, trade shows, and other events. Once the new center is in operation, several adaptive reuse alternatives have been identified as potentially viable. As raised during scoping, demolition of the existing convention center structure is also addressed.

The design of the existing facility, which has been widely criticized by the community, is a detriment to its immediate reuse. Reuse of the facility will require significant renovation to overcome the user-specific design, present negative image, and prior detrimental impacts on surrounding neighborhood (e.g., the closure of Genesee Street). The opportunity exists with this renovation to provide more regular activity, thus encouraging spin-off development and improved economic conditions in its proximity. Reuse options for single-tenant retail, multi-tenant retail, Erie County offices, mixed use offices, scholastic athletic and gymnastics facility, casino, library, and demolition are considered here. Because no parking exists on-site, it is assumed that all uses would draw from available nearby parking.

The existing pre-cast concrete two-story structure has 180,000 gross square feet of space, including a 65,000 square foot upper level exhibit floor. This upper floor is served by a truck-loading bay from Pearl Street. The ground floor level includes

meeting rooms, ballroom, restrooms and offices. This level contains a sunken floor plane accessed by stairs and ramps.

There is no visual access to Pearl Street from within the facility. The Franklin Street-level facade provides almost 100% visibility along its length. The Court Street exit and entrance is unused. Clerestory windows surround the exhibit floor, however, there is no direct visual access at floor level for occupants. The exhibit floor ceiling height is approximately 25 feet.

Selection of Various Alternatives

This EIS evaluated several alternatives in terms of their compatibility with the existing space, as well as factors that would lead to the building's success as an adaptive re-use structure. Each criterion is given a weighting factor (in %) that reflects its relative importance in selecting a re-use. Factors considered are presented in Table 3-2. The factors and weighting explanations include the following:

- The degree to which the building type can act as a major attraction within the city, region and state (weight given = 20%). This factor was considered to be the most important due to the City's current situation and decreasing population.

- Whether the project would provide a building type that is not already well represented in the area (weight given = 10%). Non-redundancy is important for successful operation, but not as important as being a magnet center.

- Degree of accessibility to the new use by existing transportation arteries and various modes of transportation (weight given = 10%). This factor is important, but is weighted less heavily because accessibility could be improved if the new use were a magnet center.

- Desirability of location for the particular building type, relating to the surrounding fabric, uses, and types of other buildings (weight given = 10%). The site is self-contained and fairly well-buffered from all uses except nearby railroad tracks.

- The degree to which the square footage of the new use will fit into the existing building shell (weight given = 10%). Modification of the shell through addition is difficult, hence this criterion is weighted moderately.

- Potential to complement, rather than compete with, other central business district uses. More specifically, this factor considers whether the conversion of the facility to a new use would create another vacancy elsewhere in the central business district (weight given = 10%). Publicly funded projects should not provide undue competition for private sector investment. Developing one property to vacate another public property would merely shift the reuse study elsewhere within the City.

- Compatibility with existing social, commercial, and historical neighborhood conditions (weight given = 5%). The area contains diverse uses and conditions, hence, any use could be considered compatible.

- Extent to which the existing site fulfills spatial (scale and proportion) requirements of the new use, e.g., parking, road access, infrastructure, open spaces, parks, landscaping (weight given = 5%). The site is considerably adaptable because of the existing open space.

- Ability to use existing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). The use may require additional work to fulfill mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, lighting, and acoustical requirements (weight given = 5%). The existing HVAC systems are in such a condition that extensive reworking would be necessary in most cases.

- The degree to which the new use can meet building codes without extensive changes (weight given = 5%). The construction type and specific requirement of the various uses may make structural changes difficult.

- Ability to conform to existing zoning regulations and requirements (weight given = 2%). The construction type and specific requirements of the different uses does not preclude many uses and zoning variances can be requested.

The matrix compares the refined list of building uses to the adaptive reuse criteria for each building. Uses that were highly compatible with the criteria were given a rating of 1 for that criterion, somewhat compatible uses were given a rating of 0.5 and non-compatible uses were given 0. These ratings were multiplied by the weighting percentages to give matrix scores. The scores were subtotaled for each use to arrive at a total matrix score for each use in each building section.

The matrix shows that some proposed uses for the existing structure are more suitable than others. Scores of over 70% indicate that the use is compatible and merits further consideration. Recommended potential uses are casino, single tenant retail, government offices, and athletics and gymnastics facility. Uses determined infeasible are multi-tenant retail, multi-tenant office, school, and library.

Table 3-2 Proposed Reuse Matrix

Criteria	Weight	Single Tenant Retail	Multi Tenant Retail	County Office	Mixed Use Office	School - Public, Private/ Secondary	Athletic Facility Gymnastics, Exercise, Tennis	Casino	Library	Demolition
Magnet	20%	20	20	**10**	**0**	**10**	**10**	20	**10**	**0**
Building Type	10%	10	**0**	**5**	**0**	**10**	**10**	10	**5**	**0**
Location Access	10%	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	**0**
Location Design	10%	10	**5**	10	**5**	**5**	**5**	10	10	**0**
Square Footage	10%	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	**5**	**0**
Complement Vs. Compete	10%	10	**0**	**5**	**0**	10	**5**	10	**0**	**0**
Neighborhood	5%	5	**2.5**	5	**2.5**	**2.5**	**2.5**	5	5	**0**
Site Adaptation	5%	**2.5**	**2.5**	**2.5**	**2.5**	**0**	**2.5**	**2.5**	5	5
Hvac	5%	5	**2.5**	**2.5**	**0**	**0**	5	5	**0**	**0**
Codes	10%	10	**0**	**5**	**5**	**0**	10	10	**5**	**0**
Zoning	5%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total	**100%**	**97.5**	**57.5**	**70**	**40**	**62.5**	**75**	**97.5**	**60**	**10**

Legend:

Full weight	Proposed use is highly compatible with existing building.
Half weight	Proposed use is compatible with existing building.
No weight	Proposed use is not compatible with existing building.

Casino Gaming

A casino is well suited to the site. The use is comparable in structural and occupant loads to the existing convention center. The Franklin Street windows provide visibility at street level, while the existing window-free second floor restricts views to the outside, which is a feature desired by casino operators. Casino use would provide more continuous utilization of the facility than the current use, would complement existing restaurants and hospitality businesses, and would be a regional draw.

In recent months, the potential for a casino offering high-stakes gaming has been explored. High-stakes gaming was not permitted in New York State until June 2001, when New York State Governor Pataki signed an agreement with the Seneca Nation of Indians under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), which permitted the development of three new casinos in upstate New York. The potential for gaming within Erie and Niagara Counties is currently being debated among state, county, and local stakeholders, and further economic and social feasibility studies must be conducted to assess the benefits of such a venture. However, should gaming be approved, the existing convention center would be a prime location for a casino due to its size and its proximity to the entertainment district, creating beneficial impacts for local businesses.

Retail

The property contains a sufficiently sized footprint to accommodate a large retail anchor tenant such as a Target or Walmart store. The structural design of the space would accommodate this use. The existing truck dock and windows along Franklin Street are natural complements to this use. While the property has no on-site parking, the potential exists to have package service to the existing loading dock or pull-up service at the Franklin Street entrance. The existing structure and mechanical systems can be easily retrofitted to the new use. While the store might not be a regional magnet, it would be a local magnet.

The existing convention center site has the potential for retail development, as identified by Buffalo Place, Inc., in its downtown retail presentation. In recent years, Buffalo Place has conducted various in-house studies: the Parking/Traffic Study, Downtown Employee Survey, and the Downtown Pedestrian Study. (The findings of these studies revealed that of the 50,000 downtown employees, 60% prefer to patronize retail stores during lunchtime on weekdays. The survey also indicated that lunchtime expenditures by downtown employees is $230,465 per day. Total lunchtime shopping expenditures by downtown employees is $877,960 per day.

Retail opportunities are limited and the downtown core offers little more than a dozen retail establishments, a pharmacy, and an out-of-date shopping mall. As residential development occurs, as additional employees express a desire to shop downtown, and as events such as Thursday in the Square and the summer farmer's market (held twice weekly) attract record crowds, the demand for retail increases. Over 60% of downtown employees are "very inter-

ested" in department stores downtown, as indicated by the 1998 Downtown Employee Survey (Buffalo Place, Inc.)

The R/UDAT report addressed the need for retail uses in downtown Buffalo. The report maintains the following in particular:

"The success of any downtown housing strategy for Buffalo can be strengthened by a retail mix that meets the needs of downtown resident and workers, as well as the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and region. Meeting the wants and needs of the downtown resident is the most important step in attracting and maintaining a living, working, playing, 24-7 downtown…."

"….Downtown residents have few options available to service their basic needs in the immediate area. The larger retail outlets of the past have all but disappeared from the face of the CBD. Most establishments are geared to downtown workers on their lunch breaks.…"

"The type of retail that is needed for downtown housing could be characterized as a 'first tier' retail needs for products and service that fulfill the daily needs of the downtown resident… some examples of the services that are needed for a livable or sustainable downtown are: small grocery store or convenience store; dry stores; dry cleaners and shoe repair; housewares and shoe repair; and health clubs" (R/UDAT 2001).

Should a new convention center be constructed, the existing facility could easily accommodate either big box retail or several smaller retail establishments with a draw from both downtown residents and employees. Further studies, however, including a detailed market analysis, should be conducted to determine the economic feasibility of pursuing downtown retail as a viable component of urban redevelopment.

Athletic and Gymnastics Facility

This use is compatible with the previous use in terms of structural and mechanical loads. The high second floor would allow a variety of sports uses, including gymnastics, tennis, soccer, basketball, and climbing. The first floor is well suited to gymnastics and health club uses. Uses considered should include those that complement, rather than compete with, existing businesses such as the Buffalo Athletic Club. There is currently no gymnastics center in the City of Buffalo, though the sport is gaining popularity. A use of this type would encourage and increase multi-generational utilization of Downtown.

Relocation of Governmental Offices

The county currently owns the existing facility, yet also leases 170,000 square feet of office space in area buildings to provide services. While it may seem fiscally advisable to vacate these spaces and use County-owned space, the resultant increase in downtown office vacancy rates will likely result in significant negative impacts. In addition, significant renovation and improvements of the facility would be required. For example, the 20+ foot exhibit hall is not practical for a single floor of office use, and while it may be feasible that another level could be inserted, the costs of doing so may outweigh any fiscal benefits to vacating leased space. The impact of the county move should be carefully considered in terms of its impact on local real estate markets, via a significant increase in downtown office vacancy rates.

Demolition

The idea of demolishing the existing structures was proposed during public scoping. The intention would be to simultaneously ensure that the site does not become another big empty box" and to create new open public space for people who work and live in downtown. Not only would demolition provide more green space (e.g., trees, landscaping, and vegetation) and public open space, it would also provide the opportunity to restore a portion of Genesee Street that was closed off by the construction of the existing Convention Center. Restoring and reopening the radial street pattern designed by Joseph Ellicott in 1900 would serve to reconnect the link between Genesee Street (a R/UDAT "Priority Corridor") and Niagara Square as envisioned by the R/UDAT. While the Hyatt Regency Hotel would remain, demolishing the existing Convention Center and creating and enhancing public open space (e.g., parks, plazas, and squares) would be consistent with R/UDAT recommendations for public investment.

3.9 No-Action Alternatives

Pursuant to SEQR, this DEIS must consider the No-Action Alternative. In this case, the No-Action Alternative involves keeping the Convention Center in its current facility and location and not constructing a new Convention Center, headquarters hotel, or parking garage. The Modified No-Action Alternative involves implementing strategic capital investments and improvements into the existing Convention Center in order to make the facility more competitive and minimize the projected decline in facility usage.

The Modified No-Action Alternative is seen as a short-term solution to offsetting declining usage of the existing Convention Cen-

ter. While it will result in greater economic impacts than the current facility is projected to, it would not result in the long-term positive economic benefits that would be attributable to the development of a new, larger, state-of-the-art convention center.

3.9.1 No-Action Alternative

Based on recent trends of declining usage of the existing Buffalo Convention Center, particularly by national conventions and by consumer and trade shows (moving to other local venues as discussed in Section 2 of this DEIS) it can realistically be expected that this decline would continue without substantial improvements or expansion of the existing Convention Center.

By projecting the decline in facility usage over the past 5 years into the future, an analysis shows what the direct economic impacts of the No-Action Alternative would be in 2007. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3-3, which shows the estimates for select direct economic impacts attributable to convention delegates who would be coming into Buffalo from outside of the Erie/Niagara MSA. These attendees would be responsible for injecting "new dollars" and economic stimulus into our region.

Table 3-3 Summary of Economic Impacts from Existing and Projected No-Action Alternative Convention Center Operations

	Current Existing [1] 2000	Projected No-Action Alternative [2] 2007
Direct Impact of Convention Center		
1) Estimated Out of Town Visitors/Delegate Attendance		
(No. of persons)	41,667	31,385
2) Estimated Convention Center Facility Revenue:		
Total Revenue	$792,887	$772,648
Revenue Attributed to Out-of-Town Visitors	$398,332	$388,164
3) Total direct spending (out-of-town delegates):	$23,954,766	$21,405,825
Spending on Hotels (plus Hotel food)	$13,959,002	$12,478,676
4) Hospitality-Related Jobs (for Erie County including center employees)	438	342

[1] Attendance and facility revenue data was provided by BCC

[2] Assumes no major capital expenditures, operational improvements, or promotional activities to mitigate the adverse impacts associated with the Null Alternative.

Row 1 of Table 3-3 projects the estimated number of out-of-town attendees would decrease 25% between 2000 and 2007 under the No-Action Alternative. To estimate projected attendance for the null alternative, the analysis basically assumed that the past declining trends in attendance and center patronage would continue in a linear fashion (i.e., this assumption includes no mitigating measures to offset the decline in center utilization associated with the No-Action Alternative).

Row 2 of Table 3-3 shows the estimated total Convention Center revenue that is comprised of rental revenues, revenue from in-house catering and food service, and miscellaneous categories. These revenue stream categories were estimated from operating relationships visible in historical operating statements provided by the Convention Center management and the CVB. These estimates were based on a financial model that used demand projections for attendance and assumptions about revenue per attendee and future inflation.

Row 3 of Table 3-3 shows that the total direct spending by out-of-town delegates and attendees would decrease by 10% between 2000 and 2007. The spending data is derived from the most recent *Convention Income Survey Report* published by the International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau in 2000. This report provides a breakdown of spending per day and the average length of day for a convention related stay. The analysis adjusted this data to reflect the Buffalo region using the *2001Corporate Travel Index* published by Business Travel News.

Row 4 of Table 3-3 shows that the estimate of the number of total hospitality industry-related jobs that are supported by the convention center-related spending in our region would decrease 22% due to the No-Action Alternative. These jobs are for all industries within this sector that are directly supported by convention center operations. For example, center employees, hotel employees, parking, and restaurants would be included in these figures.

Although the No-Action Alternative would result in continued decreased economic benefits to the local economy, as shown in Table 3-3, the No-Action Alternative would not result in the acquisition of any additional property, would not displace any businesses, would not result in increased traffic or demand for parking, and would not require the expenditure of approximately $235 million, the majority of which would be born by the State and County.

Additional capital expenditures and increasing county subsidies would be required in order to ensure basic facility maintenance and upkeep, and it is likely that subsidies would continue to increase as the facility ages and needs repairs. Because it would continue to be non-competitive with other newer regional convention and meeting facilities, the utilization of the facility would continue the decline it has been experiencing over the past five years.

In summary, this alternative would not satisfy the objectives of facility expansion, would not make the existing facility more competitive for attracting new convention center or trade show activity, would not provide a state-of-the-art facility that would attract national conventions, and would not result in increased economic activity resulting from the construction and operation of the facility.

3.9.2 Modified No-Action Alternative

Erie County can undertake certain actions and capital improvements to the existing Convention Center in order to make it more competitive against other local meeting venues, and therefore reduce the decline in facility usage and resultant economic impacts.

Since 1996, Erie County has spent nearly $4 million in improvements and upgrades to the existing facility, including lobby upgrades, moving the escalators, separating the convention floor from the lobby, refurbished storefronts, and resealed and recaulked the entire building.

In 2001, the County committed $1.5 million in improvements, such as ballroom renovations, and updating and replacing ceilings, light fixtures, and carpeting in the first floor meeting rooms. Pending funding availability, projected improvements in 2002 will likely include other upgrades to the lobby and bar, painting the exhibit hall ceiling, upgrading the walkway to the Hyatt, new signage along Pearl Street, improving teleconferencing capabilities in the meeting rooms, improving the snow-melting system in the sidewalks, and new carpeting for the exhibit floor (Machelski 2001).

However, these are primarily cosmetic improvements. While these improvements are intended to make the facility more competitive compared to other competing facilities, they are short-term fixes that do not address the long-term issues of the facility's age, condition, and lack of on-site parking.

According to the CVB, approximately $7 to 10 million of additional improvements, including meeting room space, lobby area, HVAC improvements, electrical improvements, kitchen upgrades,

and providing state-of-the-art internet and communications upgrades to the meeting rooms and exhibit space, will make the existing facility competitive with other local consumer and trade show venues in the short term (Machelski 2001, Geiger 2002).

The most significant improvement that can be made to maintain market share would be to make available approximately 300 dedicated parking spaces within one or two blocks of the existing convention center (Geiger 2002), which can be achieved within the City's current parking expansion plans and will cause no significant adverse environmental impacts.

These costs are preliminary order-of-magnitude estimates and are not based on any design, engineering, or feasibility studies. Prior to implementation of this course of action, more detailed planning and engineering studies and designs would be required to more accurately estimate potential costs associated with the Modified No-Action Alternative.

Assuming that these improvements were made, and that 300 spaces of free parking could be provided (on site or within one or two blocks) it would stabilize projected attendance figures and make the facility more competitive than it currently is. While these improvements would not make the existing convention center facility compatible with other state-of-the-art facilities nationally, primarily because of the age and design of the facility and because the facility would not be enlarged, it would provide a cost-effective, short-term solution to declining attendance figures, and much of the projected decline in facility usage could be overcome with these improvements (and an aggressive marketing effort).

It is estimated that the Modified No-Action Alternative would result in stabilizing total attendance at approximately 375,338 attendees per year by the year 2006. While higher than the estimated total attendance of 315,178 attendees associated with the No-Action Alternative, it is less than the 417,128 total attendance that the projected new facility at the Mohawk Site would result in over the same time period (see Appendix C).

The Modified No-Action Alternative would require considerable financial resources be committed by Erie County (and possibly the State of New York and the City of Buffalo) over the next 3 to 4 years to keep the Convention Center at or near its current level of usage. While these financial resources (estimated at $10 million) are considerable, they are significantly less than the costs of con-

structing a new facility and result in a significant contribution to the local economy and tax revenue.

There are no significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the Modified No-Action Alternative.

3.10 Regional Convention Center Alternatives

In light of the comparative analysis presented in Sections 2.6 and 2.8 of this DEIS, it is clear that the existing Convention Centers in Buffalo and Niagara Falls currently are competing for the same market of regional trade shows, meetings, and events, and that both are losing market share to newer meeting facilities and hotels in western New York. It is also generally accepted that both facilities are outdated and are not competitive in terms of attracting national convention in terms of facility size, conditions, and facilities against peer cites that have new convention center facilities (e.g., Providence and Milwaukee).

Since new, modern, and competitive convention center facilities are being evaluated in both the City of Buffalo and the City of Niagara Falls, perhaps a regional perspective may be a viable and prudent course of decision-making. Rather than both facilities being planned independently, this alternative decision-making process would evaluate options cooperatively from a regional standpoint.

Implementing a Regional Convention Center Alternative would require county, state, and local governments, development agencies, and convention and visitors bureaus in the Erie-Niagara county region to work together to identify and evaluate regional approaches to providing modern convention facility(ies) that meet the needs of all parties. Rather than building what would best benefit Erie County, or the City of Buffalo or the City of Niagara Falls, all involved agencies would work together to determine how to make the best use of available revenue streams and funding sources to provide coordinated and complimentary convention center facilities in a manner that does not result in overlap of services and facilities in western New York.

The Regional Alternative, while meriting substantial consideration, has not been sufficiently developed to be considered in detail in this DEIS. The State of New York is the designated lead for redevelopment of Niagara Falls, and, as such, they and the City of Niagara Falls will need to be involved in the planning and analysis of such a facility(ies). To date, the planning for redevelopment of Ni-

agara Falls has not progressed to include proposals for specific convention center facilities.

It is also imperative that other regional planning and development agencies and organizations, elected officials, and the public be involved in this regional approach. Agencies such as the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), ECIDA, NCIDA, and others need to be active participants.

3.11 Alternatives to Be Considered

For the purposes of this Draft EIS, the alternatives determined to be feasible to the extent that they warrant consideration in this document include the Mohawk Site, the Waterfront Site, Expansion of the Existing Site, and the Modified No-Action Alternative.

Other alternative sites identified during scoping have been determined not to warrant further consideration. Alternative Convention Center Size is not considered further, however, if the County determines that a smaller convention center facility merits consideration, based on public input, an updated market analysis would need to be prepared in order to determine if such a facility is economically viable. If determined to be viable, it would be considered via future SEQR documentation.

The Regional Alternative, while meriting substantial consideration, has not been sufficiently developed to be considered in the DEIS at this time. This alternative decision-making approach would require that all key agencies be actively involved in joint discussions aimed at identifying potential solutions or regional opportunities. Once potential solution(s) are identified and agreed on by the key agencies, proposed alternatives may be subject to SEQR analysis at some point in the future if the lead agency determines that potential significant environmental impacts may result.

Of the alternatives evaluated, the No-Action Alternative (including the Modified No-Action Alternative) would result in the least impacts on the natural and urban environment. Both the Mohawk Site and the Waterfront Site alternatives would result in certain environmental impacts, however these impacts can be minimized through implementation of mitigation measures and design considerations.

4 Environmental Setting and Impacts

This section of the Draft EIS describes the existing setting and conditions in downtown Buffalo and in the vicinity of the Mohawk Site, the Waterfront Site, and the site designated for potential expansion of the existing convention center. Each subsection is broken down to provide the reader with an understanding of the existing conditions and potential project-related impacts. Mitigation measures, where appropriate, are identified in Section 5 ("Mitigation") of this DEIS.

4.1 Land Use

4.1.1 Local Land Use Patterns

Land use in Buffalo's downtown is diverse, and primarily comprises government, banking, legal, and other professional services industries in the City's Central Business District (CBD). Throughout the rest of downtown, land uses are interspersed with industrial, warehouse, manufacturing, entertainment, restaurant, some limited retail uses, and housing. All three project sites are located within the City of Buffalo's Central Planning Community. Figure 4-1 presents land use patterns in downtown Buffalo.

Office/Commercial Uses

Of the 4.83 million square feet of office space within the downtown area, 4.02 million square feet are currently under lease (*Buffalo Business First* March 19, 2001). Major offices and facilities in the downtown area include the following:

- HSBC Arena, developed in 1996;
- HSBC Center located on the block bordered by Seneca, Pearl, Lower Terrace, and Washington streets, several blocks south of the Mohawk site;
- One M&T Plaza, located on Main Street between Eagle and North Division streets;

- Main Place Center, which contains an office tower and the Main Place Mall, located on the block bordered by Main, Court, Pearl, and Church streets;

- M&T Center (formerly Goldome Center), located at Main and Chippewa Streets;

- The 460,000-square feet Key Center, Fountain Plaza Twin Towers location, on the block bounded by Main, Chippewa, Huron, and Pearl Streets.

Downtown Buffalo also exhibits significant regionally based entertainment uses. These uses are concentrated primarily in the Chippewa and Theatre Districts.

The Theatre District is generally located along Main, Franklin, and Washington Streets between Tupper and Chippewa Streets, and includes three major theaters (Shea's Performing Arts, Studio Arena, and the Pfeifer Theater) as well as several smaller theaters.

Since the mid- to late-1990's, the Chippewa district and, subsequently, the northern portion of the downtown area have experienced revival in the way of restaurant, nightclub, and hotel uses. The former Jackson Building site contains the newly constructed Hampton Inn and Suites, a 144-room hotel with on-site parking. Various coffee houses, dining establishments featuring local and ethnic cuisine, nightclubs, and bars are located along Chippewa Street between Elmwood and Main streets, with office space and studio apartments found on neighboring blocks, north of West Tupper and surrounding the Chippewa district.

Retail Uses

Downtown Buffalo once offered such significant retail facilities as the Adam, Meldrum & Anderson store, Kleinhan's, M. Wile and Company, F.W. Woolworth's, and more recently, the upscale Taylor's department store, but the retail sector has experienced loss and decline in the past several years. Major department and mall anchor stores are no longer found in the downtown area and the only significant retail opportunities are concentrated in the Main Place Mall, bounded by Court, Pearl, Clinton and Main streets; the Market Arcade, within the Theatre District; Theatre Place, along Main Street and within the Theatre District; the Brisbane Building, across from the Main Place Mall and on the northeast corner of Clinton and Main streets; and the first floor of the Statler Towers, bounded by Franklin and Mohawk streets and Delaware Avenue.

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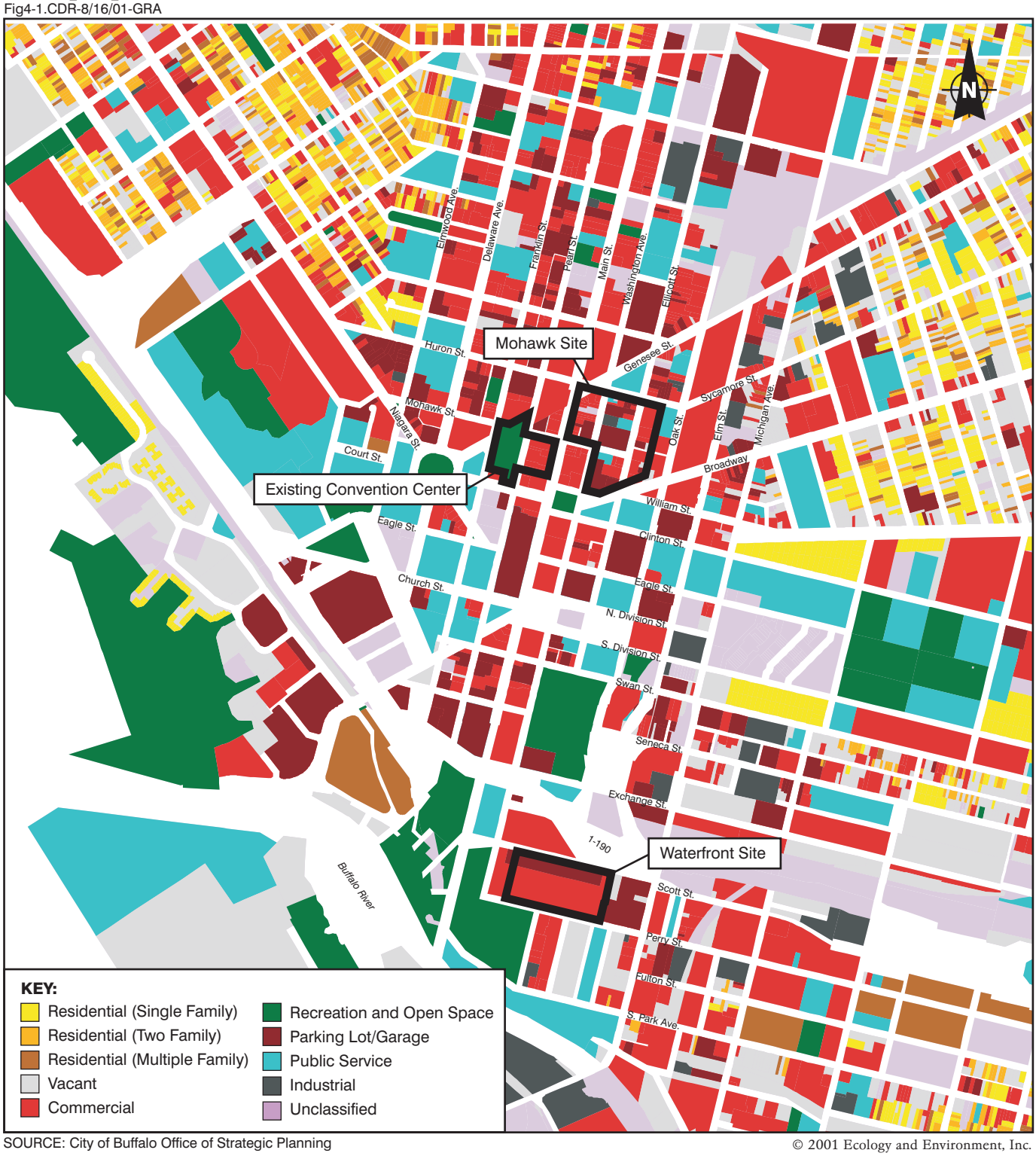

SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

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Figure 4-1 DOWNTOWN LAND USE PATTERNS

In addition, small, independent retail stores are interspersed throughout the urban core.

Retail uses are more abundant in the communities adjacent to the downtown core, with facilities in such areas as Niagara Street (west of the CBD) that offer ethnic specialty foods and products; and in the flourishing Allentown Historic District (north of the CBD). While downtown retail has declined significantly, it is anticipated that future downtown housing initiatives will result in the development of additional retail facilities in the CBD.

Residential Uses

Approximately 3,200 people reside in the CBD and waterfront area (Buffalo Place 2001). The downtown area is also located within the Central Planning Community, which had a population of 5,680 persons in 1990. 2000 Census data indicates that the population has increased to 6,485 persons, a 12.4% increase and one of the few areas in the city of Buffalo that saw an increase in population. Existing residential development is sparse, occurring only in a few mid- to high-rise complexes within the downtown core and in the Waterfront Village area, which is adjacent to the Erie Basin Marina. In addition, established residential neighborhoods are found on the fringes of the downtown area, approximately four city blocks from the Mohawk site and west of Delaware Avenue; west of Elmwood Avenue; east of Niagara Street; and east of Oak Street. The most recently developed single-family-home neighborhood is located immediately west of Delaware Avenue, with approximately 30 homes located in a cul-de-sac on Cary Street.

The Theatre District's Ansonia Center Building is a mixed-use complex located at the intersection of Main and Tupper streets. The development consists of commercial and office space as well as high-end residential units, with one-bedroom loft apartments starting at rents of $550 per month. Commercial tenants include Ticket Master, Sherwood Foods, Buffalo Community Foundation, Empact.com, the Shull Group, and Hillside Family Services. Additional luxury units and condominiums are found in small rental projects such as City Centre (30 units) on the southwest corner of Main Street.

Downtown's existing market-rate units include the 10-unit Market Arcade Apartments, which are located above the Irish Classic Theater and across from Shea's Performing Arts Center in the Theatre District; and the Spaulding Building (12 units), located near the northwest corner of Main and Goodell Streets.

Waterfront Village is located on the southern portion of the downtown area. The residential neighborhood was created as a part of the Waterfront Redevelopment Project and has experienced significant growth since 1980. Over 350 residential units were constructed in this area, along with compatible mixed-use development, such as office space and water-related recreational uses. Other major residential uses adjacent to or near the waterfront area include the Marine Drive apartments, a high-rise apartment development with 616 units, and the mid- to high-rise Shoreline and Harborview apartments, located along Niagara Street and consisting of 770 units. Finally, six waterfront luxury condominiums are currently being constructed at 50 Waterfront Circle.

Cultural and Open Space/Park Uses

Downtown Buffalo includes several public parks, squares, and areas of open space that provide passive recreational opportunities to workers, visitors, and residents. These areas include the following:

- Public squares and vest-pocket parks such as Niagara Square, Lafayette Square, Ellicott Square, and Cathedral Park. Lafayette Square is the site of Thursday in the Square, an outdoor summer concert series that sponsors local and national acts and attracts 200,000 attendees within a 15-week period;

- Fountain Plaza's Rotary Rink, is managed by Buffalo Place, Inc., and offers free ice skating during the winter months;

- The Buffalo Naval and Servicemen's Park, a 5-acre facility at the foot of Main Street approximately .8 mile west of the Waterfront site. The park contains two moored World War II vessels and associated exhibits; and

- Buffalo Place, the 1.2-mile pedestrian mall that runs along Main Street from Tupper Street to South Park Avenue associated with the aboveground portion of the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) light rail rapid transit (LRRT). The Buffalo Place boundaries will soon be expanded to include the Chippewa District, northwest of the Mohawk site. In addition, Buffalo Place sponsors a summer country market twice each week along Main Street near the Main Place Mall.

Cultural land uses are located primarily within the Theater District and include Shea's Performing Arts Theater, Studio Arena, Theatre of Youth, Irish Classical Theater, Tralfamadore cafe, the Pfeifer Theater, and the CEPA gallery.

Governmental and Institutional Uses

Various governmental and institutional uses are located in the downtown area. Erie Community College (ECC) City Campus is located several blocks south of the Mohawk site; city, county, state, and federal office buildings; County Courthouse; Erie County Holding Center; Federal Courthouse; Central Police Services; and a municipal fire station are relatively near all three sites.

Sports Assembly Uses

Three major regional sports facilities are located in downtown Buffalo, relatively proximate to the Mohawk site and expansion alternative, and closer to the Waterfront site. HSBC arena, constructed in 1996, is sited on Buffalo's waterfront and is the home of the city's NHL franchise, the Buffalo Sabres. The HSBC Arena is directly adjacent to the Waterfront site. Dunn Tire Park, a 20,000-seat open-air baseball stadium, is home to the city's AAA baseball franchise and is located five blocks south of the Mohawk site on the block bounded by Swan, Washington, Oak, and Exchange Streets. The ECC Flickinger Athletic Center is a multi-facility sports complex including a pool, track, basketball, and other related activities. The center is located between Elm, Oak, and Swan Streets.

The recreational facilities described above will be positively affected by the proposed project. Due to the close proximity of HSBC Arena, Dunn Tire Park, and the ECC Flickinger Athletic Center, attendance at sports and entertainment events is anticipated to increase.

This is an important relationship because the CVB has been successful in attracting amateur sporting events to various facilities in western New York.

4.1.2 Site-Specific and Adjacent Land Use

Mohawk Site

The Mohawk site is located in downtown Buffalo within the relatively dense fringes of the CBD. The overall Mohawk site comprises 55 parcels of land and includes a mix of commercial, vacant, government, industrial, and public utilities land uses. Table 4-1 identifies land uses for the Mohawk site by number of parcels, acreage, and percentage of land use. Mohawk site land uses are also illustrated in Figure 4-2.

As Table 4-1 indicates, the Mohawk site occupies approximately 11 acres of land with the vast majority of land uses being desig-

nated as commercial (70%). On site uses include Catholic Charities, the City of Buffalo Fire Dispatch Center, the University of Buffalo Education Center, various bars, and the Mohawk Parking Ramp, among others.

Table 4-1 Mohawk Site Land Use Characteristics - 2001 Land Use

Land Use	Parcels	Acres	% Land Use
Commercial	43	7.76	70.0%
Vacant Land	3	0.3	2.6%
Community Services	4	1.78	15.8%
Public Utilities	1	0.84	7.5%
Industrial	1	0.28	2.5%
Undefined	3	0.30	2.6%
Total	**55**	**11.2**	**100%**

Source: Erie County Property Database, May 2000

Land uses adjacent to the project site are generally consistent with those within the Mohawk site. These uses include the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library Central Branch, which is located south of the project site, and commercial uses along Washington, Main and Oak streets. The site is also in close proximity to Lafayette Square, the Niagara Mohawk headquarters building, and the Hyatt Hotel. East Side residential neighborhoods on the outside border of the CBD are approximately 0.8 mile east of the Mohawk Site.

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site is located in southern section of downtown Buffalo between Scott and Perry streets. The overall project site comprises two parcels of land that are currently used for surface parking. Table 4-2 lists the land uses for the Waterfront site by parcel number, acreage, and percentage of land use. The Waterfront site land uses are also illustrated in Figure 4-3.

Table 4-2 Waterfront Site Land Use Characteristics - 2001 Land Use

Land Use	Parcels	Acres	% Land Use
Commercial	2	10.4	100
Total	**2**	**10.4**	**100**

Source: Erie County Property Database, May 2000

The Waterfront site is approximately one block east of Main Street and the HSBC Arena. It is approximately 0.8 mile east of the inner harbor. The site occupies approximately 10.4 acres of land that is designated exclusively commercial. On-site uses include surface

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SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

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Figure 4-2 EXISTING LAND USE
MOHAWK SITE

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SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

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Figure 4-3 EXISTING LAND USE WATERFRONT SITE

parking for the HSBC Atrium office building and event parking for the HSBC Arena.

Land uses adjacent to the project site are generally consistent with those at the Waterfront Site. Large, open areas east and southeast are utilized for parking for HSBC Arena and other downtown events. Various manufacturing and industrial facilities are also adjacent to the Waterfront site south across Perry Street. Situated north of the site are *The Buffalo News* building and an elevated portion of Interstate 190.

Expansion of Existing Convention Center

The Buffalo Convention Center site is located in downtown Buffalo, approximately one block west of the Main Street Pedestrian Mall and LRRT system. The existing Convention Center renovation and expansion site occupies approximately 5 acres of land. The project area extends east across Pearl Street and includes the parcels of land between Mohawk and Court streets encompassing seven buildings on Main Street, including the former L.L. Berger's building and a former Rite Aid building.

The overall project site comprises 8 parcels of land and includes a mix of commercial and recreation/ entertainment uses. Table 4-3 presents land uses for the existing Convention Center project site by parcel number, acreage, and percentage of land use. Existing Convention Center land uses are also illustrated in Figure 4-4.

Table 4-3 Existing Convention Center Expansion/ Renovation Project Site Land Use Characteristics - 2001 Land Use

Land Use	Parcels	Acres	% Land Use
Commercial	7	1.94	40%
Recreation and Entertainment	1	2.72	60%
Total	**8**	**4.6**	**100%**

Source: Erie County Property Database, May 2000.

Land uses adjacent to the existing Convention Center include the Convention Center towers to the south, the Hyatt Hotel to the northeast, Olympic Towers to the north, and the Statler Towers to the west.

4.1.3 Land Use Planning Objectives and Controls

Development in downtown Buffalo is guided and controlled by a number of plans, proposals, and ordinances, all of which are targeted toward preservation, protection, and revitalization of the city.

These include the City of Buffalo Zoning Ordinance (Chapter LXX of the Ordinances of the City of Buffalo); the Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan; the City of Buffalo Draft Comprehensive Plan; and the New York State Coastal Management Program.

Buffalo Zoning Ordinance

The City of Buffalo Zoning Ordinance, Chapter LXX of the Ordinances of the City of Buffalo, is the main ordinance regulating land use within the city. The ordinance includes specific regulations regarding land use types; density of population; provision of off-street parking; and the location and size of buildings, yards, and open spaces. The ordinance underwent a major revision in 1987 to promote and expand on existing downtown revitalization activities, including the construction of the Buffalo Place pedestrian mall. This amendment created the following three additional overlay zones in the downtown area:

- D-O – Downtown Opportunity District;
- R-R – Residential Restricted District; and
- I-I – Institutional Light-Industrial District.

These new overlay districts were established to encourage new downtown residential opportunities; develop pedestrian-scale retail uses; promote attractive and cohesive downtown design; and define right-of-way regulations to streamline development review (City of Buffalo 1987).

Despite the presence of these overlay districts, underlying zoning designations (e.g., C1, C3, M1) established by the City of Buffalo Zoning Ordinance determine allowable uses in the downtown area.

Areas not affected by the 1987 amendment are within a mix of high-density residential and commercial designations. Downtown zoning districts are illustrated in Figure 4-5.

Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan

The Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan, prepared in 1999, presents a series of strategic actions that would achieve a new vision for downtown in the 21st century. While the strategic plan is more flexible than the Draft Comprehensive Plan, the recommendations are regarded as a part of a citywide plan for revitalization.

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SOURCE: City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

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Figure 4-4 EXISTING LAND USE
EXISTING CONVENTION CENTER SITE

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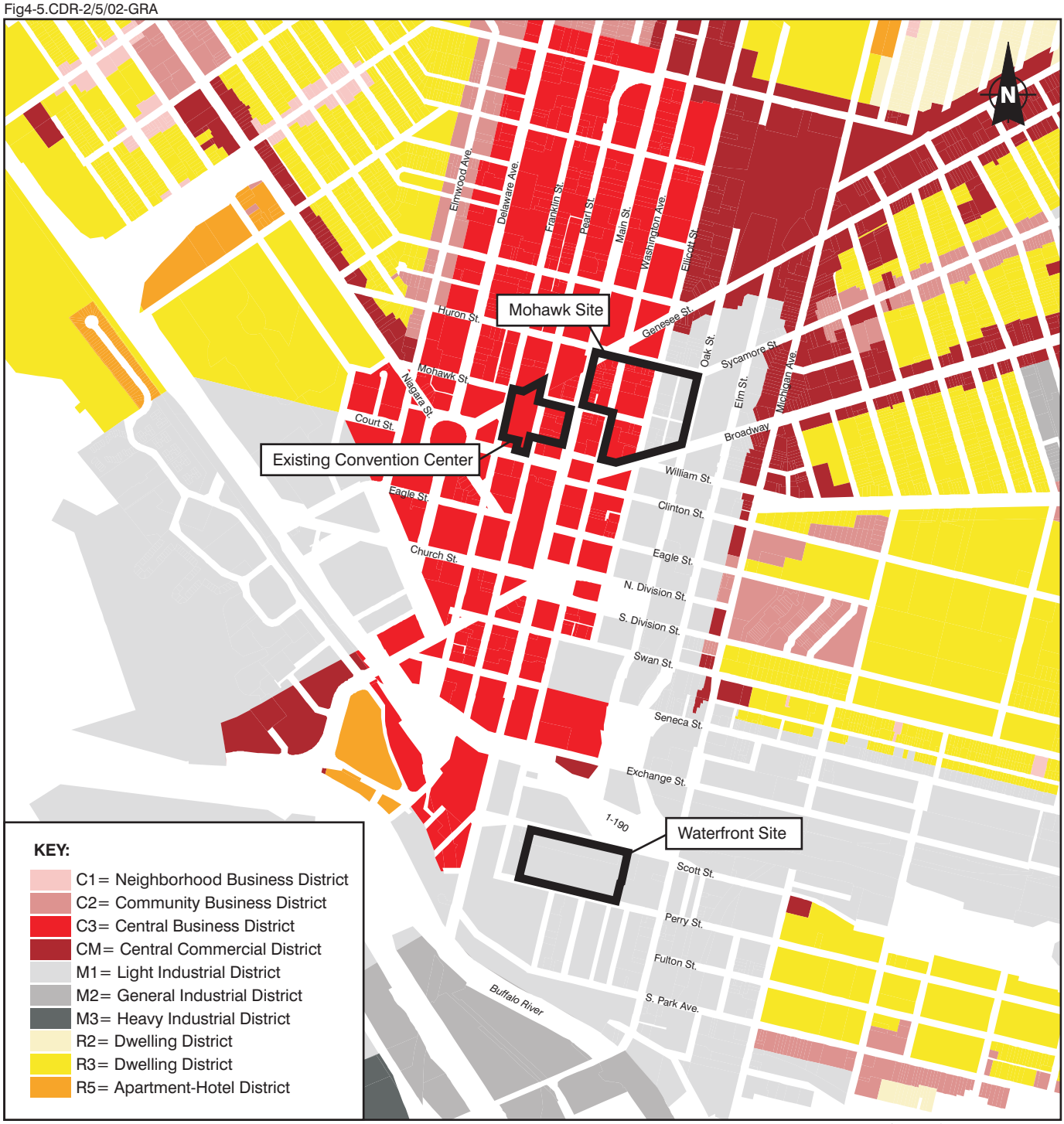

SOURCE: Charter and Code of the City of Buffalo, Chapter 511, Zoning.

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Figure 4-5 DOWNTOWN ZONING PATTERNS

The report describes Downtown's challenges as well as opportunities for residential and economic development. Focus areas include retail, housing, entertainment, population, consumer spending, employment, redevelopment, tourism, and others. The plan specifically mentions "substantial new convention markets" and presents impacts projected in the Johnson study (C.H. Johnson 1997).

City of Buffalo Draft Comprehensive Plan

The City of Buffalo is currently preparing a Comprehensive Plan for development in the city. During the initial stages of the planning process, the city conducted an inventory of the existing conditions in twelve identified Planning Communities, prepared citywide goals, objectives, and policies, and, based on community input, developed action items for each of the Planning Communities. Focus areas include regionalism, economic development, education, environment, quality of life, public services, housing/neighborhood development, historic preservation, urban resources and design, transportation, land use, open space, and parks and recreation.

Also during the initial phases of the planning process, the City discussed the construction of a new convention center as a means to economic development: "The City is in favor of constructing a new convention center at an appropriate scale, design and location…. The Center will be sited so as to ensure ready access to the City's finest hotels, restaurants, and entertainment and cultural centers" (Draft Comprehensive Plan 2001).

The planning process also considered the restoration and improvement of the downtown portion of Genesee Street, including signage, plantings, new streetlights, and paving patterns that will draw attention to the street's radial pattern.

4.1.4 Current Zoning

Mohawk Site

The majority of the parcels that make up the Mohawk site are zoned C3. According to the City of Buffalo zoning code, the following types of uses are permitted in the C3 zoning category (while this list is representative of the types of uses permitted, other uses are also permitted): banks; business, or professional offices; restaurants; contracting shops, passenger terminals/stations, warehousing, and accessory uses and structures (Charter and Code of the City of Buffalo, New York, V57 Updated through 2-10-2001).

In addition to limiting specific types of uses, the C3 zones also impose height restrictions on development within this zoning district. According to the City's zoning code, the maximum allowable height of structures in this zoning category is one and three-fourths (1.75) the width of the street on which the lot abuts. Additional height shall be permitted, but is subject to a setback of 1 foot from each lot line for each 5 feet of additional height.

The remaining parcels in the Mohawk project area are zoned M1, Light Industrial. Uses permitted in the City of Buffalo's Light Industrial District include all uses permitted in the CM district; automobile assembly; freight terminal; welding or other metal working shop; and concrete products manufacturing. The zoning characteristics for the Mohawk site are presented in Table 4-4.

Table 4-4 2001 Zoning – Mohawk Site, Waterfront Site, and Existing Convention Center Expansion Project Site

Site	Zoning	Parcels	Acreage
Mohawk Site	C3	39	6.9
	M1	16	4.3
Waterfront Site	M1	2	10.4
Expansion of Existing Convention Center	C3	8	4.6

Waterfront Site

The two parcels that comprise the Waterfront site project are zoned M1, Light Industrial (see Table 4-4). The zoning characteristics for the Waterfront site are presented in Table 4-3. Permitted uses in this district include all uses permitted in the CM district; automobile assembly; freight terminal; welding or other metal working shop; and concrete products manufacturing.

Existing Convention Center Expansion

The parcels comprising the existing convention center expansion site is zoned C3, CBD (see Table 4-4). According to the City of Buffalo zoning code, uses permitted in the CBD include, but are not limited to, banks; business or professional offices; restaurants; contracting shops, passenger terminals/stations, warehousing, and accessory uses and structures.

4.1.5 Proposed Land Use Plans and Developments

While the Mohawk site is not zoned for residential development, a proposal to construct/renovate housing on the Mohawk site at 499-501 Washington Street (the Holling Press Building) has been submitted to the City of Buffalo (Heinle 2002). The project would involve the conversion of the Holling Press Building to approxi-

mately 30 upscale condominium units and unfinished shells that could be developed by the individual homebuyer.

Residential development also is proposed in the vicinity of the Mohawk site in the corridor bounded by Ellicott, Oak, Genesee, and Tupper Streets. The project would involve construction/renovation of eight aging and underutilized buildings into up to 100 loft-style apartments, 38 of which would be developed in the first phase (Heinle 2002). While these buildings are not on the Mohawk site, spin-off development is anticipated to occur as a result. A *Buffalo News* article cited city planning officials as stating that the proposed project is "attractive and financially feasible." The project would transform a number of vacant and underused structures into units with one-, two-, and three-story floor plans, and would cost approximately $11 million. If financing is secured as planned, the project will follow an aggressive schedule that will commence in spring 2002.

Finally, residential development has been proposed and is slated to occur in downtown's Theater District. These projects include the proposed development of 34 to 40 upscale housing units on the 680 block of Main Street; the proposed development of housing at a local youth hostel located at 657-669 Main Street; the development of eight units at the former Tent City site (674-676 Main Street); and the potential development of residential units above the Pfeiffer Theater site (683-685 Main Street).

Residential development also is addressed in *Buffalo Niagara NOW*, a comprehensive plan that was developed to coordinate and streamline the development process, revitalize Buffalo and Niagara Falls' downtowns, and improve local business climates. The objectives of one component of the plan, "Initiative #4: Downtown Buffalo Housing," are to develop a plan for market-rate housing that strategically develops specific areas of downtown (i.e., sections of Broadway, Lafayette Square, Niagara Street, and the 700 block of Main Street); to create clusters; to incorporate mixed-use zoning; and to raise new, more flexible sources of private and public financing (Buffalo Niagara Partnership web site: www.thepartnership.org/bnnow/prior2_revit?dntn/init4_downtown_housing/).

The project will result in the following specific outcomes:

- The City of Buffalo will implement a comprehensive strategic housing plan that commits to the targeted areas of housing;

- The State legislature will pass legislation designed to prompt residential development;

- Financial institutions will develop financing mechanisms for developers who build in accordance with the City housing plan to help bridge the financing gap;

- A new New York State building code rehabilitation overlay section will be designed to accommodate effective, economical conversion of existing buildings to residential use; and

- Housing developments that are already underway will be completed, and a case study project for downtown housing will be identified.

To date, several milestones have been met, and the pursuit of gap financing and other objectives are in progress.

Residential and downtown development are also the focus of Downtown 2002!, an implementation campaign that focuses on living, working, and accessing downtown, was established to drive and monitor public and private projects within the CBD and surrounding neighborhoods. Now in its second year, the program continues to review strategies and objectives outlined in the Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan. While many objectives have been realized to date, several future developments are planned or are currently under construction in the downtown area. Future land use developments expected to be underway during the construction of the proposed convention center are summarized below.

The Buffalo Inner Harbor Project/Erie Canal Harbor

The State of New York is in the process of restoring the Erie Canal commercial slip as a part of the Buffalo Inner Harbor revitalization. The project site is at the western terminus of the Erie Canal, and proximate to the Waterfront site alternative.

Empire State Development Corporation is responsible for managing the design and construction of the project, which has undergone numerous revisions and review by state, local, and federal officials. A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement has been conducted and redesign work begun, with construction of the naval ship basin and Veteran's Park to continue to completion in late 2001 and summer 2002 respectively. The project will be constructed in three phases, with a final completion date estimated for August 2004.

Adelphia Harbor Center

The Adelphia Communications Corporation intends to develop a mixed-use office tower, adjoining HSBC Arena on a 1.9-acre site bounded by Scott Street on the north, Perry Street on the south, Washington Street on the east, and Main Street on the west. The proposed project will involve construction of a proposed 15- to 30-story building to accommodate 2,000 employees, and a maximum of 565,000 square feet of related development, including parking.

Bellesario/L.L. Berger Building

A private developer is in the process of constructing a mixed-use retail and residential project in the former L.L. Berger building. The project will convert the first floor to retail space and develop 29 luxury residential units.

Century Centre I

The former Trico Building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, will be a mixed-use development project that will consist of two sections. The south section will be a six-story complex with office and commercial space on the first three floors and 260 market rate residential units located above. The north section will be a four-story building with dedicated office space.

Century Centre II

The former M. Wile clothing factory is currently being converted into a high-tech office building with 171,000 gross square feet of space. The five-story building will have an atrium on the Ellicott Street side; new windows; and approximately 30,000 square feet of leasable space per floor. The building was listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places and will be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Apex Exchange, 655 Main Street

A private developer is currently renovating a vacant McDonald's into a 70,000-square feet, multi-tenant smart building with prime office space.

Chippewa Street Improvements

The City of Buffalo is improving the Chippewa Street Entertainment District with installation of new garbage cans, stamped concrete at intersections, new street lighting between Delaware and Elmwood, and new banners and flower baskets.

4.1.6 Land Use Impacts

The potential land use impacts associated with the development of the new Buffalo convention center, hotel, and associated facilities

were evaluated for each site alternative. Land use impacts were evaluated according to whether construction of a new convention center or expansion of the existing convention center would result in any of the following:

- Constraint by existing land uses;
- Land use conflicts with adjacent uses;
- Conflicts with future land uses or preclude future development at the identified sites; and
- Implementation within the framework of regulatory constraints.

No-Action Alternatives

Implementation of either the no-action alternative or the Modified No-Action Alternative assumes that a new convention center would not be built at either the Mohawk or Waterfront sites and that the existing Convention Center would not be expanded. Under this scenario, reuse of the identified alternative sites would not occur. Implementation of this alternative would not result in internal or external land-use conflicts, conflicts with future uses, or conflict with local regulatory constraints. The sites would remain in their current state with no impact on the on-site or adjacent land uses.

Existing Land Use Constraints Analysis

Mohawk Site. Existing land uses at the Mohawk site consist of a mix of commercial, public service, parking, and industrial structures. Because construction of a new convention center and hotel would potentially require the site to be predominantly cleared of existing structures, constraints at this site posed by existing land uses are significant. A total of 30 buildings would require demolition within the project boundaries to prepare the site for construction (see Figure 4-6).

Although several of the existing structures at the Mohawk site are currently vacant and underutilized, the site is characterized by an inventory of unique and diverse urban structures. On-site uses include single-story retail, entertainment, and office building uses as well as multi-story commercial and industrial-type structures, some of which are considered to be architecturally and historically significant. Construction of a convention center and associated

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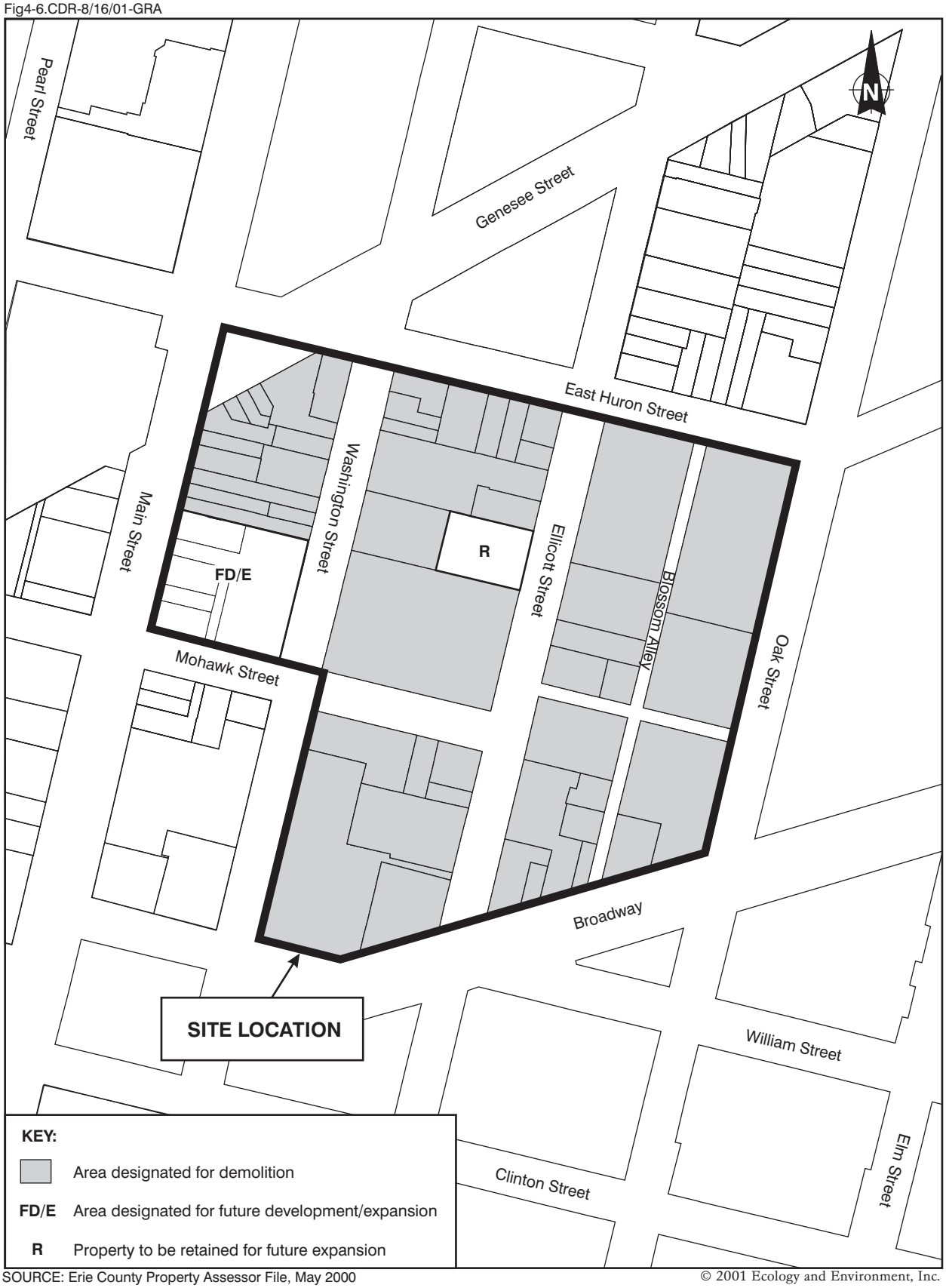

SOURCE: Erie County Property Assessor File, May 2000

SCALE
0 100 200 Feet

Figure 4-6 NEW BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER EIS MOHAWK SITE - AREAS TO BE DEMOLISHED, RETAINED, OR DESIGNATED FOR FUTURE EXPANSION

1,250-space parking garage within this project site would potentially result in a loss of diverse urban fabric, replacing it with a single, large homogeneous use.

The need to span Ellicott Street and possibly Washington Street so that they remain open for traffic is considered a design constraint, but one that can be achieved. Because the exhibit floor could be elevated so that it is even with Main Street, it would be possible to ensure that it would sufficiently span Ellicott Street and Washington Street.

Construction of a convention center and associated facilities at the Mohawk site, however, would also result in beneficial impacts on land uses along Main Street on the west side of the site. Construction of a convention center at the Mohawk site could result in the redevelopment of up to 16 buildings on Main Street that are currently vacant or underutilized that would potentially have an overall positive impact on the land-use character of Main Street and the downtown pedestrian mall.

Due to concerns raised regarding the displacement of existing business owners (and hence land uses) from the Mohawk site, 20% of the approximately 35 businesses (representing approximately 25% of approximately 659 total employees) were contacted. Of those contacted, 71% indicated that they would relocate to another location downtown and 29% indicated that they would leave the City of Buffalo. The businesses who indicated they would leave the City employ fewer than 30 persons. Based on this analysis, most of the businesses, uses, and resultant jobs would remain in downtown Buffalo if a convention center were to be located at this site. As mitigation, Erie County would provide relocation assistance to all businesses affected by the proposed convention center, hotel, and parking facility.

Of particular concern regarding the conversion of the Mohawk site from its current uses to the proposed convention center, is the “lost opportunity costs” associated with precluding other potential development (i.e., downtown housing) on the site. Lost opportunity costs would include land use impacts and economic impacts (see Section 3 of this DEIS).

This EIS assumes that an estimated 70 housing units, at the very least, could be developed on the Mohawk site if the convention center is not constructed at this site (see Appendix C for more detail). This assumption was based on the R/UDAT recommendations that are consistent with comments received from citizens on

the types of development that would be compatible and desired at the Mohawk site if the convention center is not pursued. This EIS examined the number of acres by land use and likely future uses for the parcels at the Mohawk site without a convention center. The hypothetical construction of new residential units and the renovation of older historic units, based on housing construction cost per unit information (R/UDAT 2001) and what is allowable under current zoning regulations, it was determined that approximately 3 acres of new and renovated units (70 units total) could be available. At 100% occupancy, approximately 160 people would occupy the housing units, assuming 2.29 people per household.

While no housing units exist on the Mohawk site, the City is promoting housing opportunities on and near the Mohawk site consistent with the recommendations of the American Institute of Architects Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT), which met in March 2001.

While construction of a convention center on the Mohawk site would preclude the potential for future residential development on 11.5 acres of land, it should be noted that the Mohawk site is zoned for M3 and C3 uses, and not specifically for residential development.

Waterfront Site. The Waterfront site is currently vacant of buildings and is used as a surface parking lot. Construction of the convention center and associated facilities at this site would result in significant conflicts with the site's current use. The site provides parking to HSBC bank employees and is used for operation and distribution activities of the *Buffalo News* on the northern portion of the site. Construction of a convention center at this site would significantly constrain these operations. Impacts on existing land uses at the Waterfront site are considered adverse and significant.

Existing Convention Center Renovation/Expansion. Renovation/expansion of the existing convention center would require the expansion of the existing center on Franklin Street east across Pearl Street and impact up to eight parcels of commercially developed land on Main Street. To achieve additional exhibit space, expansion of the existing center would be constructed above and across Pearl Street connecting to Main Street. The buildings impacted on Main Street are a mix of commercial and retail establishments. Although the facades of the impacted structures on Main Street may potentially remain undisturbed, demolition of the majority of the back-end and internal portions of the existing structures is anticipated to support this alternative. There are no

constraints presented by existing on-site land uses that would affect renovation and expansion of the existing center, except that the facility could not function efficiently and effectively (as noted in Section 2).

Consistency with Adjacent Land Uses

Mohawk Site. The development of a new convention center (including parking and hotel) at the Mohawk site would generally be compatible with land uses immediately adjacent to the project site. Land uses west and south of the site consist of a mix of commercial (e.g., retail establishments along Main Street), recreation and open space (e.g., Lafayette Square), and public service (e.g., Buffalo and Erie County Public Library). Land uses east of the site along the Elm/Oak corridor include public service (e.g., Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. facility), commercial, and other property designated vacant. Other commercial and public service uses (e.g., retail uses on Main Street and Niagara Mohawk Power Corp office building) are also present north of the site along Huron Street.

Residential uses are located east of Michigan Avenue approximately 0.8 mile from the Mohawk site. Although use of the site for a convention center would be different from these uses, it would present no direct land-use conflicts to the immediate surrounding area.

Indirect potential land use conflicts may result at the Mohawk site with respect to residential uses to the east. Existing land use and traffic patterns characterizing the Elm/Oak corridor east of the Mohawk site already provide a real and perceived barrier between the residential areas to the east and the downtown area to the west. The Elm/Oak corridor does not currently provide for a continuous and natural pedestrian flow to and from downtown from east side residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods primarily include areas east of Michigan Avenue, along William, Broadway, Sycamore, and associated side streets. Commercial, public service, industrial, and other structures in this area currently are perceived as physical barriers to east side neighborhoods. Placement of an additional 400,000-square foot convention center structure and hotel in this area would increase this perception and may further discourage the connection of east side residential neighborhoods to this portion of downtown Buffalo.

However, if designed appropriately (i.e., incorporates pedestrian-friendly linkages, street level commercial and retail uses, effective visual links to Main Street, appropriate landscaping, non-homogeneous facade treatments, and improvements to radial roadway linkages) these perceived impacts would be minimized. It will

be important for the design of the facility to be responsive maintaining and improving these linkages and visual connections.

Redevelopment of the Niagara Mohawk Building as a hotel merits serious consideration and feasibility analysis.

Waterfront Site. Construction of a new convention center and hotel at the Waterfront site presents land-use conflicts with adjacent uses. Land uses surrounding the Waterfront site are predominantly commercial, recreation, and industrial (e.g., HSBC Atrium Building, *Buffalo News*, the Donovan State Office Building, and various industrial and warehouse structures). Construction of a new convention center at this location would generally be consistent with the eclectic land use character of the area and would be similar in terms of intensity of use. However, as mentioned previously, operation and distribution activities of the *Buffalo News* would be significantly constrained, as would employee parking for the HSBC Atrium building. Impacts on directly adjacent land uses at the Waterfront site are considered adverse and significant.

It should be noted that location of the convention center at the Waterfront site could result in positive impacts on ongoing redevelopment of the waterfront/inner harbor located 0.8 mile to the west. However, the realized benefits may be reduced because there would be no direct visual connection between the convention center and the waterfront/inner harbor.

Existing Convention Center Expansion. Expansion of the existing convention center requires the structure to be extended east to Main Street. Land uses adjacent to the Main Street properties are commercial and retail and, although different, are generally compatible with convention center use. There are no constraints presented by existing on-site land uses area that would affect renovation and expansion of the existing convention center other than those associated with demolition and possible retention of the building facades to maintain the non-homogeneous nature of Main Street.

Consistency with Future Land Use/Precluded Development

Mohawk Site. The proposed redevelopment of the Holling Press Building for housing is the only other development project proposed for the Mohawk site. This redevelopment would be precluded by construction of a convention center. The DEIS examines this and other potential development that would be precluded from occurring at the Mohawk Site. The most likely and realistic devel-

opment that would occur at the Mohawk Site is for uses that are allowable under the current C3 and M1 Zoning. As noted previously, the C3 Zone allows for uses such as banks, business or professional offices, restaurants, contracting shops, warehousing and accessory uses. Uses permitted in the M1 Zone include these as well as automobile assembly, freight terminals, welding or other metal working shops, and concrete product manufacturing. There are sufficient other areas in Buffalo zoned for these uses so that precluding them at this site would not result in an adverse impact to the City's ability to attract and retain development.

Section 4.3, Economic Impacts, of this Draft EIS includes an estimate of the foregone economic activity at the Mohawk site that would be precluded by the development of the convention center.

It is possible that additional residential uses could be developed at this site, given the small- to mid-sized buildings that could be converted to loft-type residential structures. The City of Buffalo's director of Residential Development indicated that several plans for downtown residential development have been proposed conceptually, and that implementation of many of these housing proposals would occur in the vicinity of the Mohawk site (Heinle 2002). Projects located close to the Mohawk site are "on hold" until a decision is made in regard to a new convention center, and construction of a convention center on this site certainly would preclude the strong potential for residential development that otherwise could occur.

Recent planning initiatives commissioned by the City of Buffalo and others, including the Downtown Strategic Plan, Downtown 2002!, the City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, and the Buffalo Niagara Now downtown housing initiative, as well as non-commissioned studies such as the R/UDAT study, have all addressed the issue of encouraging more people to live in downtown Buffalo as a means to realize the revitalization of the CBD. The focus of many of these studies has been on developing strategies to encourage a mixed use downtown with reuse of the City's inventory of architecturally and historically significant buildings and neighborhoods for urban housing.

The Mohawk site possesses the types of vacant and underutilized buildings that could potentially be converted into a wide range of urban housing types, including loft space and/or high-end apartment complexes. A proposal to convert the Holling Press Building to 30 upscale condominium units has been submitted to the City (Heinle 2002). Construction of a convention center and hotel on

this site would preclude reuse of the site for downtown housing and or other mixed-use development.

Waterfront Site. The Waterfront site currently functions as the main surface parking lot for employees of the HSBC Atrium and event parking for HSBC Arena. However, HSBC has identified the parking lot property as a potential site for future eastward expansion of its office complex (Keating 2001). Not only would construction of a convention center and hotel on this site preclude HSBC's office expansion, it would also adversely affect operation and distribution activities of the *Buffalo News*.

It is not reasonable to consider that the site would be used for other uses in the near future. Both HSBC Bank and the *Buffalo News* rely on these parcels for their current and future operations and, as such, redevelopment for other uses would not be precluded by constructing a convention center at this site.

Existing Convention Center Renovation/Expansion. There are no known redevelopment plans for the buildings located on Main Street between Court and Mohawk streets that would be precluded by the expansion/renovation of the existing convention center.

Regulation and Plans

Comprehensive Plan. In general, a proposed new convention center is consistent with downtown development and land use objectives as well as overall City of Buffalo objectives.

The City of Buffalo's draft Comprehensive Planning document, titled "A Framework For Success, Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Actions," lays out a series of action items aimed at achieving stated goals, objectives, and policies for a wide range of issues. Development of a new convention center is discussed in the document under the broad category of Economic Development. Although it does not recommend a specific site alternative, Action Item 12 in the draft Comprehensive Plan states that "the City is in favor of constructing a new convention center at an appropriate scale, design, and location, and will make every effort to see that it becomes a reality. The Center will be sited so as to ensure ready access to the City's finest hotels, restaurants, and entertainment and cultural centers" **(**City of Buffalo 2001). Therefore, it can be assumed that construction of a convention center at any of the alternative locations would be consistent with the City's draft Comprehensive Plan, provided it meets the above-stated goals.

Land Development Regulations. Development of a new convention center will be regulated by various land development ordinances and plans established by the City of Buffalo. These regulatory documents include Chapter 511 of the City Charter and Code (the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Buffalo), compliance with the Buffalo Urban Renewal Plan, and compliance with any other special zoning districts established that supercede existing underlying zoning (e.g., Special Coastal Overlay District). Identification of the regulations that would apply to each alternative are addressed below:

- **Chapter 511 - Zoning Ordinance of the City of Buffalo.** Current zoning at the Mohawk site is C3 (CBD) and M1 (Light Industrial); current zoning at the Waterfront site is M1; and current zoning at the existing Convention Center is C3. Construction of a convention center and hotel would be considered consistent with zoning at all three identified site locations and considered a permitted use. Depending on the final design of the proposed new convention center, designated height restrictions within established zoning districts will need to be considered and complied with.

- **Urban Renewal Plan.** The Waterfront site falls within the boundaries of an expired Urban Renewal District. Because the district is expired, construction of a new convention center at the Waterfront site would not be subject to Urban Renewal regulations (Grunzweig 2001). The Mohawk site and the existing convention center site are not within an Urban Renewal District.

- **Special Zoning Districts.** The Waterfront site is located within the Buffalo Coastal Special Review District (BCSRD) established by Chapter 511, Article XVI, Section 511-67 of the City of Buffalo Zoning Ordinance, which controls development in coastal areas. The special review district requires, with exception of certain uses, that the Buffalo Planning Board review the project and make recommendations to the Common Council with regard to issuing a restricted use permit prior to the establishment of uses within the district. The BCSRD also establishes height restrictions for uses planned within the district that will need to be considered following design of a convention center.

- **Preservation District.** The three site alternatives were reviewed by the City of Buffalo Historic Preservation Office and it was determined that none fall within the boundaries of any

designated Historic Preservation District. The Waterfront site is adjacent to the Cobblestone Historic Preservation District, which comprises portions of the following streets: Perry, Illinois, Mississippi, Baltimore, Columbia, South Park, and Michigan. The NYS Office of Parks and Recreation has determined that 515-517, 523, 525, 529, 535, and 537 Main Street; 11 Genesee Street; the Buffalo Urban League Building; and 504 Washington Street are contributing buildings in the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District.

- **Design and Site Plan Review Ordinance**. In compliance with Chapter 511-138 of the Charter and Code, construction of a new convention center and hotel at any of the alternative sites will require the City of Buffalo to review the design and site plan. Design and site plan review will be conducted by the City Planning board and will address such issues as: parking, means of access and egress, pedestrian sensitivity, screening, signage, landscaping, architectural features, location and dimensions of buildings, impact of the development on adjacent properties, environmental matters, and such other elements that may be related to the health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

- **Downtown Strategic Plan.** The City of Buffalo Downtown Strategic Plan asserts that a new convention center is necessary for Western New York to position itself to attract larger conventions and to introduce significant revenue from outside the region into the local economy. The Plan recommends the Mohawk site as the best location for a new center, stating it has all the characteristics necessary for a successful convention center (Hamilton, Houston, Lownie 1999).

4.2 Socioeconomic Conditions

This section of the Draft EIS addresses the socioeconomic conditions of the project area and includes sections on population (4.2.1), employment and income (4.2.2), taxes and revenue (4.2.3), housing (4.2.4), R/UDAT recommendations (4.2.5), and socioeconomic impacts (4.2.6).

4.2.1 Population

A general decrease in the populations of both the City of Buffalo and Erie County has been the trend in recent years. According to the US Bureau of the Census, Erie County's population in 2000 declined by 18,276 persons to 950,256, marking a 2% decrease since 1990. In addition, the City of Buffalo's population in 2000

was 292,648 persons, which is approximately an 11% decrease from the 1990 population of 328,123 persons. A portion of the drop in the Buffalo population can be attributed to a general move from the City to more suburban areas elsewhere in Erie County. According to the City of Buffalo Draft Comprehensive Plan, population projections for 2010 indicate that the City's population will decline to an estimated 275,000 persons.

The City of Buffalo is divided into twelve Planning Communities. The downtown area is located in the City's Central Planning Community. Because the downtown area is comprised primarily of non-residential uses, the residential population in this Community is limited. According to the most recent data available, the Community had an estimated population of 6,485 in 2000 (City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, 2001).

Population projections for the Central Planning Community show a growing population over the next 10 to 20 years. This anticipated growth is expected primarily due to aggressive downtown housing initiatives and specific projections for 1,500 additional dwelling units to be created within the Central Planning Community by 2010. The population characteristics of Erie County, City of Buffalo, and Central Planning Community are summarized in Table 4-5.

Table 4-5 1990-2000 Population Characteristics for Central Planning Community, City of Buffalo, and Erie County

Geographic Area	Population (1990)	Population (2000)	Percent Population Change (1990-2000)
Central Planning Community	5,680	6,485	14.2%
City of Buffalo	328,123	292,648	-10.8%
Erie County	968,532	950,256	-1.9%

Sources: US Census Bureau, City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

Outside of the residential population in the Central Planning Community area, the downtown area maintains a significant business population during the workweek. The Buffalo business population, which populates the downtown area during business hours, was estimated during the summer of 2000 to be 50,046 persons, up 3,346 (7%) from the survey conducted in 1998 (Buffalo Place, "Downtown Buffalo Business and Employment Trends," February 2001).

There are currently no residential dwellings, and hence no permanent population residing, on either the Mohawk site, the Waterfront site, or the proposed Expansion site.

4.2.2 Employment and Income

Regional economic and employment statistics illustrate that the Buffalo region, specifically Erie County, is primarily a service-based economy with 30.6% of area jobs falling within the service industries, followed closely by the wholesale and retail trade industry at 23.7%. The rate of growth has also been the highest in the service industry from 1989 to 1999, as opposed to the manufacturing industry that experienced the largest percent decrease. Still, manufacturing is one of the leading employment sectors in the county, along with government. Local, state, or federal governmental agencies employ over 71,000 of the 456,273 workers in Erie County. Additional details regarding employment in the region are presented in Table 4-6.

Table 4-6 Employment Sectors – Erie County

Industry	1989	% of Total	1999	% of Total	% Change
Manufacturing	76,357	17.2	68,211	14.9	-10.7
Construction	17,176	3.9	16,868	3.7	-1.8
Transportation and public utilities	19,742	4.4	20,070	4.4	1.7
Wholesale and retail trade	113,122	25.4	108,297	23.7	-4.3
Finance, insurance and real estate	27,298	6.1	28,016	6.1	2.6
Services	116,058	26.1	139,752	30.6	20.4
Other private industries	3,018	0.7	3,355	0.7	11.2
Government	72,181	16.2	71,704	15.7	-0.7
Total	**444,952**	**100**	**456,273**	**100**	**2.5**

Source: New York State Department of Labor 2001a

Detailed employment information for the City of Buffalo for particular business sectors that are influenced by activities at the Buffalo Convention Center was obtained through the New York State Department of Labor. This information was gathered using employment statistics for businesses and combining them through their respective SIC codes. The summary is presented in Table 4-7 below for the years 1997 to 2000.

Over the past four years, only the hotel sector showed an increase, amounting to approximately a 9% growth in direct employment.

Table 4-7 Detailed Employment Sectors – City of Buffalo

Industry	1997	1998	1999	2000
Accounting	1,188	1,117	1,062	1,154
Doctors and Dentist Offices	3,175	3,198	3,000	3,066
Eating and Drinking Establishments	7,127	7,054	7,068	7,185
Food Stores	4,352	3,495	3,518	3,277
Gas Stations	332	338	315	286
General Merchandise Stores	1,060	1,008	1,024	1,014
Hospitals	20,549	19,562	18,716	18,324
Hotels	870	860	985	950
Miscellaneous Personal Services	73	135	708	48
Miscellaneous Retail	2,576	2,441	2,414	2,369
Parking Facilities	298	373	355	255
Personal Supply Services	4,270	3,786	3,969	3,753
Real Estate	2,091	2,161	2,170	2,139
Services to Buildings	787	724	823	728
Wholesale Trade	10,008	10,588	10,224	9,467
Total	**58,756**	**56,840**	**56,351**	**54,015**

Source: New York State Department of Labor.
Note: Employment represented in table does not reflect all employees and employment sectors within the City of Buffalo.

Nine of the top 19 employers in the City of Buffalo are hospitals or other healthcare-related industries. The City's three largest universities, the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo South Campus, Buffalo State College, and Canisius College, are also among the City's top employers, along with private sector employers American Axle, Adelphia Communications Corporation, American Brass, Gibraltar Steel, HSBC Bank, M&T Bank, National Fuel, Niagara Mohawk, Rich Products, Tops Market LLC, and Verizon Communications.

The City of Buffalo is targeting growth in the industries that will support high-salary, skilled workers. Industries with the highest annual salaries include manufacturing, transportation and public utilities, and finance, insurance, and real estate. Average annual salaries in Erie County by industry are shown in Table 4-8.

The average household income in the City of Buffalo in 1990 was $24,803, with 26% of persons living in the City of Buffalo living below the poverty level.

Table 4-8 Average Annual Salary by Industry Erie County, 1999

Industry	Average Annual Salary ($)
Manufacturing	45,722
Construction	35,857
Transportation and public utilities	38,003
Wholesale and retail trade	19,583
Finance, insurance, and real estate	38,562
Services	25,593
Other private industries	20,641
Government	36,470

Source: New York State Department of Labor 2001c.

Facility Employees and Payroll

The Buffalo Convention Center employs 74 full-time and part-time workers and has the ability to obtain an additional 40 wait staff to adjust to seasonal and special events. Table 4-9 offers a categorical breakdown of employment by subject.

Table 4-9 Buffalo Convention Center Employment – June 2001

	Full Time	Part Time	Total
Maintenance	13	5	18
Engineering	5	0	5
Administration	7	0	7
Security	2	5	7
Food and Beverage Management	4	0	4
Wait Staff	4	10	14
Bartenders	2	5	7
Cooks	1	2	3
Dishwashers	1	4	5
Miscellaneous	0	4	4
Total	**39**	**35**	**74**

Sources: Buffalo Convention Center

Table 4-10 presents a historical account of the annual payroll paid to employees by the Buffalo Convention Center. For the years 1997 to 2000 an average of $836,138 is paid annually to the employees, peaking in 1999 with $879,950.

Table 4-10 Four-Year Payroll History for Buffalo Convention Center Employees

	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average
Salaries and Wages	816,425	801,643	879,950	846,535	836,138
Payroll Taxes	81,140	77,647	86,106	84,954	82,462
Employee Benefits	126,901	134,542	160,521	167,911	147,469
Total Personnel Expenses	**1,024,466**	**1,012,832**	**1,126,577**	**1,099,400**	**1,066,069**

Source: Buffalo Convention Center Financial Statements

Employment Statistics for Alternative Locations

Information regarding industry type and employer was gathered from Buffalo Place using parcel information for each particular site. Industry data for the Buffalo/Erie County area was used to predict wages. Estimates were totaled and summarized in Table 4-11.

Table 4-11 Summary of Employment Statistics

Location	Number of Employees	Estimated Payroll
Mohawk Site	659	$18,507,294
Waterfront Site	0	$0
Expansion of Existing Center	956*	$19,004,056**

Source: Buffalo Place database.

* Of this, 945 are with the Erie County Department of Social Services in the Mohawk Building.

** Of this, $14,784,556 is estimated to be payroll for Erie County employees that will be incorporated elsewhere downtown and should not be considered an economic loss.

Description of Industries at the Mohawk Site

The Mohawk site represents a mix of commercial, industrial and service-oriented businesses. The larger employers are Ferguson Electric Construction Co. Inc., Emulso Corporation, Catholic Charities, Verizon, Nova American Group, Inc., and the Education Opportunity Center, among others. The Table 4-12 lists the SIC codes and the industry description of businesses located on the site.

4.2.3 Taxes and Revenues

The City of Buffalo's total budget for fiscal year 2000-2001 is $380,727,158. This amount includes all of the revenues and resources that the City will take in and pay out throughout the fiscal year. It also includes all interfund transfer payments made by and to the City of Buffalo (e.g., $66 million transferred to the Buffalo Board of Education, $26 million transferred to the City's capital debt service, $3.4 million paid to the City of Buffalo by the local water system provider). The City's General Fund Budget (less all interfund transfer payments) for 2000-2001 is $288,317,277.

Table 4-12 SIC Codes and Industry Description of Businesses on Mohawk Site

SIC Code	Industry Description
7521	Automobile Parking
5932	Used Merchandise Stores
2841	Soap and Other Detergents
1731	Electrical Work
4225	General Warehousing and Storage
1623	Water, Sewer, and Utility Lines
5812	Eating Places
2121	Cigars
8399	Social Services
5661	Shoe Stores
8661	Religious Organizations
5699	Misc. Apparel & Accessory Stores
5999	Misc. Retail Stores
7231	Beauty Shops
5992	Florists
5810	Eating and Drinking Places
6411	Insurance Agents, Brokers & Services
8249	Vocational Schools
8351	Child Day Care Services

The primary revenue source for the City of Buffalo is the collection of taxes, which can include real property taxes or sales, use and transfer taxes. In 2000-01, tax receipts as part of the General Budget Fund for the City of Buffalo were estimated at $149 million, the majority of which will be from real property taxes. For the City of Buffalo's General Budget Fund, other major sources of revenue include licenses and fees ($33 million), inter-governmental revenue ($187 million), and service charges ($10 million).

For the year ending December 31st, 2000, of the $719 million in total revenue for the County's General Government Fund, Erie County gained almost $418 million in revenue from taxes. The majority of these county revenues are spent on economic assistance and opportunity programs (nearly 63%).

Currently, the project sites comprise a mix of parcels that are publicly and privately owned. Parcels that are owned by private entities generate revenue for Erie County and the City of Buffalo through the payment of property and utility taxes. According to the City of Buffalo Assessment Department and Erie County Real

Property Taxation office, parcels that comprise the project sites generate tax revenue that is outlined below.

Mohawk Site

The Mohawk site represents the most diverse combination of parcels with respect to size and use. Table 4-13 provides a list of taxes collected by both the City of Buffalo and Erie County, which totals $387,665 of tax revenue. According to City officials, an additional $6,865 in garbage taxes was collected in 2000, and $11,600 in Sewer Rent was collected in 1999.

Table 4-13 Mohawk Site: Tax Revenue to Erie County and the City of Buffalo

Property Address	Total Assessed Value	2001 Tax Bill		
		Erie County Taxes	City of Buffalo Taxes	Total Taxes
5 Genesee	47,800	717	2,883	3,600
7 Genesee	94,000	814	3,567	4,381
9 Genesee	74,000	710	3,013	3,723
11Genesee	513,000	0.00	0.00	0.00
5 East Huron	90,000	1,357	6,694	8,051
23 East Huron	195,000	882	7,653	8,535
31 East Huron	12,400	81	702	783
33 East Huron	11,300	73	635	708
35 East Huron	13,000	84	733	817
75 East Huron	395,500	1,790	15,521	17,311
451 Washington	833,200	3,540	15,671	19,211
465 Washington	1,524,100	0.00	0.00	0.00
477 Washington	2,245,300	0.00	0.00	0.00
499 Washington	450,000	5,115	22,637	27,752
500 Washington	40,000	237	1,177	1,414
504 Washington	30,000	0.00	0.00	0.00
510 Washington	100,00	886	3,923	4,809
515 Washington	503,500	4,506	23,916	28,422
517 Washington	50,000	466	2,354	2,820
519 Washington	463,900	0.00	0.00	0.00
290 Ellicott	535,000	0.00	1,093	1,093
296 Ellicott	6,100	3,217	26	3,243
301 Ellicott	174,000	995	8,632	9,627
303 Ellicott	150,000	679	5,886	6,565
317 Ellicott	16,400	148	1,285	1,433
321 Ellicott	163,300	739	6,407	7,146
329 Ellicott	155,000	837	7,259	8,096

Table 4-13 Mohawk Site: Tax Revenue to Erie County and the City of Buffalo

Property Address	Total Assessed Value	2001 Tax Bill		
		Erie County Taxes	City of Buffalo Taxes	Total Taxes
332 Ellicott	252,300	0.00	0.00	0.00
338 Ellicott	45,900	330	2,860	3,190
337 Ellicott	900,000	4,087	35,435	39,522
348 Ellicott	50,000	181	1,569	1,750
495 Main	200,000	2,750	10,987	13,737
501 Main	160,000	1,450	6,867	8,317
505 Main	135,000	1,669	7,455	9,124
513 Main	275,500	3,556	18,021	21,577
515 Main	110,000	1,639	5,886	7,525
521 Main	50,000	1,490	4,905	6,395
523 Main	70,000	875	3,531	4,406
525 Main	75,000	1,402	3,923	5,325
529 Main	75,000	1,369	2,943	4,312
535 Main	68,000	1,351	5886	7,237
537 Main	200,000	1,467	6,237	7,704
2 Blossom	7,800	164	1,423	1,587
4 Blossom	5,400	42	368	410
6 Blossom	5,900	46	404	450
47 East Mohawk	78,500	393	3,408	3,801
51 East Mohawk	104,700	679	5,886	6,565
20 Broadway	244,700	1,107	9,603	10,710
36 Broadway	150,000	679	5,886	6,565
42 Broadway	38,500	224	1,950	2,174
50 Broadway	100,00	426	3,692	4,118
56 Broadway	4,100	98	856	954
180 Oak	575,000	2,603	22,620	25,223
198 Oak	375,000	1,597	13,850	15,447
Total		**59,547**	**328,118**	**387,665**

Source: City of Buffalo Assessment Department, County of Erie 2001.
Note: Properties along the Main Street corridor have a 'Mall Tax' incorporated within the City of Buffalo Tax total.

Waterfront Site

The combination of the two existing properties results in an estimated $57,068 in tax revenue, $50,391 to the City and $6,677 to the County, as shown in Table 4-14.

Table 4-14 Waterfront Site: Tax Revenue to Erie County and the City of Buffalo

Property Address	Total Assessed Value	2001 Tax Bill		
		Erie County Taxes	City of Buffalo Taxes	Total Taxes
95 Washington*	760,000	4,940	42,560	47,500
33 Scott	371,100	1,737	7,831	9,568
Total		**6,677**	**50,391**	**57,068**

Source: City of Buffalo Assessment Department, County of Erie 2001.

* Estimated from data obtained on other comparable surface parking lots.

Expansion of the Existing Convention Center

The following table identifies buildings along Pearl and Main Street that would be lost if the existing Buffalo Convention Center were expanded. These properties contribute an estimated $179,981 in tax revenue (see Table 4-15).

Table 4-15 Expansion of Existing Convention Center: Tax Revenue to Erie County and the City of Buffalo

Property Address	Total Assessed Value	2001 Tax Bill		
		Erie County Taxes	City of Buffalo Taxes	Total Taxes
153 Franklin	25,287,000	0.00	0.00	0.00
450 Main	570,000	6,132	13,267	19,399
456 Main	122,200	4,798	8,164	12,962
460 Main	114,100	3,962	6,122	10,084
472 Main	81,400	4,457	8,164	12,621
478 Main	3,500,000	38,386	83,687	122,073
283 Pearl	100,000	802	2,040	2,842
Total		**58,537**	**121,444**	**179,981**

Source: City of Buffalo Assessment Department, County of Erie 2001.

4.2.4 Housing

The 1990 US Census documented approximately 151,971 housing units in the City of Buffalo. Characteristics of those housing units are shown in Table 4-16.

In the City of Buffalo, 39% of the residential units are owner-occupied and the average value of owner-occupied homes is $58,740. This is substantially lower than the $83,230 average home value in Erie County. In the City of Buffalo 51% of the residential units are renter-occupied and 10% of the residential units are vacant. This vacancy rate is higher than the Erie County average of 6%.

Table 4-16 Housing Types in the City of Buffalo

Housing Type	Percentage of Total Housing Types
Single-family detached	27.70
Single-family	3.54
Two-family homes	44.16
Multi-unit structures	24.49

Source: 1990 US Census

The Central Buffalo Planning Community is primarily a non-residential area comprised of census tracts 13.01, 14.01 (block group 1), 25.01 (block groups 1, 3, and 4), 71.02 (block groups 1, 2, and 3), 71.01, and 7202 (block group 1). In 1990, there were 3,298 housing units located in the Central Planning Community (US Census 1990). Most of these units were apartment buildings and complexes concentrated on the west side of the Community. Of the units present in the Central Planning Community, 78.2% of the residential units in Buffalo were considered multiple units. An estimated 9.67% of the residential units were designated owner-occupied. In this Planning Community 16.43% of residential units are vacant, which is greater than both the vacancy rates of the City (10%) and the County (6%).

Site-Specific Housing

- **Mohawk Site.** The Mohawk site, located within the Downtown Opportunity Zoning District, does not contain any residential uses.

- **Waterfront Site.** The Waterfront site comprises two parcels of land that are used for surface parking. As such, there is no housing located on, or adjacent to, the site.

- **Existing Convention Center Expansion/Renovation.** The overall project site includes a mix of commercial and recreation/entertainment uses. The site does not contain any housing uses.

According to the Downtown Strategic Plan, the market for the future of downtown Buffalo indicates an increased demand for apartments. In addition, there are a number of areas within downtown and at the edges, adjacent to existing stable neighborhoods, that offer opportunities for housing development. They include the following:

- **Lower West Side Housing:** The lower west side of Buffalo is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. Directly west of City Hall are underutilized properties that could be assembled for new housing;

- **Home Zone Housing:** Directly east of downtown is the new Home Zone, which builds on the hundreds of single-family homes that have been constructed over the last 10 years. The Homezone will add over $46,000,000 in public and private investment, for a total of 1,218 new housing units of which 344 will be sales units. The Ellicott Town Center recently reopened with 330 rental and sales units within walking distance of downtown and numerous additional units are planned nearby;

- **New Residential Neighborhoods:** New mixed-income residential neighborhoods are also viewed as a potential to emerge. Conversion of warehouse structures in the Cobblestone area and the re-examination of nearby Commodore Perry Public Housing are potential locations for a mixed income neighborhood;

- **Future Housing Development:** The former L.L. Berger building is currently being renovated for mixed-use development. Located directly across from the Mohawk site, the building will offer 29 luxury housing units situated above two floors of commercial office and retail space. Furthermore, the Holling Press Building, located on the Mohawk site, is proposed for redevelopment to 30 condominium units, and several buildings north of Genesee Street, in the vicinity of the Mohawk site, are proposed for renovation/conversion by local developers. The underutilized buildings would be converted to approximately 100 loft units at a cost of $11 million. Other areas in the downtown core are expected to be developed for residential uses; more specifically, the Theatre District, for which several proposals have been submitted by private developers to renovate/construct upscale housing (Heinle 2002). Finally, to stimulate residential development in this area, Buffalo Niagara NOW is working with City of Buffalo officials to streamline the permitting process, and with local lending institutions to examine gap financing options (Buffalo Niagara Partnership 2002).

4.2.5 R/UDAT Recommendations

In March 2001, a team of nine experts participated in a charrette sponsored by the American Institute of Architects Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT). The team explored the topic of downtown housing and met with focus groups, various stakeholders, and the public to recommend strategies that were in keeping with the Downtown Strategic Plan. The final document detailed several conceptual strategies for residential development within urban core.

Their findings include: 1) there is a market for downtown housing; 2) achieving the market is a high priority and is feasible, but will require substantial financial gap funding; 3) a mix of residential types is required and absorption should be in modest increments totaling approximately 300 units a year; 4) the development of housing must be part of a larger strategy of downtown development; 5) there must be a broad-based consortium of leadership from the private sector, the community, and elected officials; 6) there is a need to carefully address the public realm; and 7) the strategy should take advantage of the existing building stock and link the City with its neighborhoods along the radials and Main Street.

More specifically, R/UDAT suggested that the following areas could be developed for residential uses:

- **Theater District:** Located between the Chippewa District and Allentown, the district consists of land and buildings that are suitable for housing;

- **Lafayette Square:** Situated along a radial in the CBD, Lafayette Square has potential for residential development on its northeast and southeast corners. The northeast corner of the square contains a surface parking lot, while the southeast corner is occupied by an architecturally and historically significant, underutilized hotel (The Lafayette Hotel). Both areas are suitable for rental and owner-occupied housing units. As noted elsewhere in this Draft EIS, the surface parking lot located in the northeast corner of the Lafayette site, as identified by the R/UDAT report, is also within the southern edge of the Mohawk site;

- **700 Block of Main Street:** R/UDAT proposes to reuse existing buildings on the 700 block of Main Street between Tupper and Goodell streets. The proposed housing units have the po-

tential for conventional living space, live/work space, or artists' lofts. An estimated 23 units could be developed on this block;

- **Niagara Street:** The CBD's west side contains a development opportunity on the block bounded by Niagara Street, Elmwood Avenue, and Huron Street. R/UDAT proposes development of one mixed-use building and two residential buildings with a total of 44 to 66 mixed-income rental units;

- **Main Street:** The east side of Main Street, adjacent to the Mohawk site, offers potential for adaptive reuse in three structures along the radial of Genesee Street;

4.2.6 Socioeconomic Impacts

4.2.6.1 Impacts on Population

The construction and operation (i.e., the short- and long-term) impacts of the proposed new or expanded convention center will have a negligible impact on the population distribution of the City of Buffalo and Erie County.

Short-Term

The workforce for the construction of the proposed facility will be recruited primarily from the local labor supply and is not expected to result in significant relocations either to the City of Buffalo or Erie County as a whole.

Long-Term

The staff at the Buffalo Convention Center would increase by approximately 100 persons from 74 persons to 174 persons; however, as with the construction, these additional persons will be drawn from the local workforce and will not have a significant impact on the local population or result in an influx of people.

4.2.6.2 Impacts on Employment and Income

The construction and operation of the new or expanded Buffalo Convention Center will have both short- and long-term impacts on employment and income earned in the Erie County and the State of New York. Using IMPLAN, the economic modeling software, potential job creation for the construction and operation of the facility were estimated. These results are outlined in Table 4-17 and categorized by geographic area and alternative and are presented in detail in Appendix C.

Table 4-17 Employment Estimates from Construction and Operation Phases of the New Convention Center

	Mohawk Site		Waterfront Site		Expansion Alternative	
	Jobs	Payroll (in millions)	Jobs	Payroll (in millions)	Jobs	Payroll (in millions)
Construction						
Erie County						
Direct	976	$34.8	902	$32.2	1,014	$36.2
Indirect	440	$16.6	406	$15.3	457	$17.2
Induced	368	$11.2	341	$10.3	382	$11.6
County Total	1,784	$62.6	1,648	$57.8	1,854	$65.0
New York State						
Direct	976	$37.7	902	$34.9	1,014	$39.2
Indirect	460	$19.1	425	$17.6	479	$19.8
Induced	408	$13.3	377	$12.3	424	$13.8
State Total	1,844	$70.1	1,704	$64.8	1,916	$72.8
Operations – Total Impact (as of 2007)						
Erie County						
Direct	633	$14.9	469	$11.0	418	$9.8
Indirect	93	$3.6	69	$2.7	61	$2.4
Induced	119	$3.9	88	$2.9	79	$2.6
County Total	845	$22.4	626	$16.6	558	$14.8
New York State						
Direct	634	$14.9	470	$11.0	419	$9.8
Indirect	94	$3.8	70	$2.8	62	$2.5
Induced	129	$4.2	96	$3.1	85	$2.8
State Total	857	$22.9	636	$16.9	566	$15.1

Mohawk Site

The short-term impacts associated with construction at the Mohawk site are calculated to be 1,794 additional jobs in Erie County (incorporating direct, indirect, and induced impacts). On the state level, there are estimated to be 1,844 short-jobs created as a result of the new convention center.

The long-term impacts on the county level are 845 full- and part-time jobs with associated earnings of $22.4 million dollars. By 2007, New York State is expected to have 857 new jobs added, with $22.9 million in employee compensation. This alternative results in the most new jobs and earnings during the operations phase.

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site construction impacts are approximately 1,650 jobs and an estimated 1,700 jobs for the county and state respec-

tively, which is the lowest short-term impact of all three alternatives, related to the construction phase.

By 2007, the long-term impacts are an estimated 626 jobs and $16.6 million in earnings within Erie County and 636 jobs and $16.9 million in earnings for New York State.

Existing Convention Center Renovation/Expansion

The renovation/expansion alternative results in the most jobs and earned income during the construction phase, with approximately 1,850 jobs earning $65.0 million in Erie County, and approximately 1,900 jobs earning $73 million in New York State.

In the long-term, the renovation/expansion alternative results in the lowest additional jobs generated by operations. There would only be an estimated 588 jobs within Erie County and 566 jobs in New York State, earning $14.8 million and $15.1 million, respectively.

4.2.6.3 Impacts on Taxes and Revenues

Mohawk Site

Construction of a new convention center on the Mohawk site would result in minor adverse impacts on taxes and revenues to the City of Buffalo and Erie County. The city would see a net loss of $328,118 (approximately 0.24%) in real property tax revenue, and the county would lose $54,547 (approximately 0.03%).

The Mohawk site generated $6,585 in garbage tax revenues in 2000 and $11,600 in sewer rent in 1999. Selection of the Mohawk site alternative would also result in the loss of these two sources of revenue.

Waterfront Site

The construction of a new convention center on this site, which comprises two properties, will result in an estimated loss of $57,068 in real property tax revenue; $50,391 (or about 0.04%) to the city and $6,677 (0.004%) to the county.

Expansion Alternative

Selection of the expansion/renovation alternative would amount to a $121,444 (approximately 0.09%) loss to the City of Buffalo with respect to real property taxes. An additional $58,537 (or 0.03%) in real property tax revenue would be lost to Erie County, resulting in a total loss of $179,981.

4.2.6.4 Impacts on Housing

The construction and operation of the proposed convention center site may have an indirect impact on proposed and future housing development opportunities depending on the alternative selected.

While construction of a convention center on the Mohawk site would preclude the potential for future residential development on 11.5 acres of land, it should be noted that the Mohawk site is zoned for M3 and C3 uses, and not specifically for residential development.

Development of the Waterfront site would not affect proposed or foreseeable housing projects. Expansion of the current convention center may affect future housing opportunities on the site, but this loss is not considered significant because of the small area, the types of buildings affected, and the availability of other similar structures for redevelopment.

Implementation of the No-Action or the Modified No-Action Alternative would not affect the proposed or future development of housing in downtown Buffalo.

It has been determined that the downtown Buffalo market can absorb in excess of 300 new housing units per year for the next five years (R/UDAT 2001). It should be noted that 300 units of housing per year could be accommodated in downtown Buffalo even if the convention center were built on the Mohawk site.

To encourage this development, the City of Buffalo Department of Permit and Inspection Services is currently modifying and simplifying its permitting process as an incentive for residential development, as recommended by the R/UDAT report. Most recently, the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency expressed its support for downtown housing by committing a total of $25,000 to private developers to conduct feasibility studies for downtown housing.

With this move to develop downtown housing, several projects are ongoing and other development projects have been proposed. Most importantly, goals for residential development emphasize the need to develop a critical mass of housing; to take advantage of existing architectural assets; to build on existing radials; and to enhance the connection between the CBD and the East Side. Finally, development should build upon such strengths as the downtown entertainment district, which could benefit from both residents of newly developed housing units and visitors to a new convention center.

Mohawk Site

This EIS assumes that at least 70 housing units could be developed on the Mohawk site if the convention center were not constructed at this site. This assumption was based on the R/UDAT recommendations that are consistent with comments received from citizens on the types of development that would be compatible and desired at the Mohawk site if the convention center is not pursued. This EIS examined the number of acres by land use and likely future uses for the parcels at the Mohawk site without a convention center (see Appendix C for more detail). The hypothetical construction of new residential units and the renovation of older historic units, based on housing construction cost per unit information (R/UDAT 2001) and what is allowable under current zoning regulations, it was determined that approximately 3 acres of new and renovated units (70 units total) could be available. At 100% occupancy, approximately 160 people would occupy the housing units, assuming 2.29 people per household. Short-term economic impacts associated with the construction spending and renovation of these 70 units of residential housing were estimated to create $17.2 million in economic output. However, this represents only approximately 8% to 9% of the total short-term economic impacts that could be derived from constructing a new convention center.

Assuming 100% occupancy, household spending of the estimated 160 Mohawk site residents would generate $5.2 million in total economic impact and 40 jobs annually across Erie County. As noted, however, these economic impacts cannot be classified as net new or incremental impacts on the county. It should be noted that even if the convention center were built on the Mohawk site, the impacts from lost housing opportunities likely would not be lost to the county. The residents who would generate these economic impacts most likely would still reside in Erie County and/or elsewhere in downtown Buffalo. The impacts could be classified as net new or incremental economic impacts on the region only if each and every household occupying one of the 70 units moved to the site from outside the Buffalo/Erie MSA. Assuming that the foregone household spending was by residents new to the downtown area from outside Erie County, the net economic impact from convention center operations spending would be reduced to $60.5 million in total economic output (i.e., $65.7 million minus $5.2 million, as discussed in Appendix C).

While no housing units exist on the Mohawk site, the City is promoting housing opportunities on and near the site consistent with the recommendations of the American Institute of Architects Re-

gional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT), which met in March 2001. Recently, a developer has proposed developing approximately 30 housing units in the Holling Press Building. Developing the convention center at this site would preclude this proposed development.

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site currently functions as the main surface parking lot for employees of the HSBC Atrium and event parking for the HSBC Arena. While construction of a convention center on this site would preclude potential expansion of existing office space, there are no future plans for housing development at the Waterfront site.

Existing Convention Center Renovation/Expansion

According to the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, there are no plans identified for future housing for the buildings located on Main Street between Court and Mohawk streets that would be precluded by the expansion or renovation of the existing convention center.

No-Action Alternative

Implementation of either the No-Action or Modified No-Action alternative would not result in any direct impacts on existing housing.

4.3 Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis

Section 2 (Purpose and Need) and Appendix C of this EIS present the economics of the proposed project and discuss a) why there is a need for a new convention center and b) the short-term and long-term economic impacts of constructing a new convention center. The impacts are presented in detail with respect to the Mohawk site, which is the preferred site, and are outlined more generally for the Waterfront and Expansion site alternatives.

Section 2 presents data and discusses economic trends that support the need for a new or updated facility. It is important to note that the convention center operating revenue has dropped from approximately $1.2 million in 1997 to $790,000 in 2000, while the total operating expenses have fallen slightly, from $1.95 million in 1997 to $1.86 million in 2000. As a result, the ratio of operating revenue to operating expenses (i.e., the operating margin) has fallen from 61.5% in 1997 to 43% in 2000 due to the lower effective utilization of the facility. The antiquated convention center

has increasingly become a financial burden to the county over the last few years.

Appendix C describes in detail the projected economic and fiscal impacts potentially resulting from both the construction and operation of the proposed convention center at each alternative site. Appendix C of this draft EIS contains the following main subsections:

- Background information on the assumptions employed, convention center patronage demand projections, and financial projections for the proposed new convention center;
- The estimated annual recurring economic and fiscal impacts flowing from the operation of the proposed project at each alternative convention center;
- The economic and fiscal impacts of the construction of the convention center at the alternative sites;
- The anticipated economic impacts of constructing a 400-room headquarters-quality hotel;
- An estimate of foregone economic activity at the Mohawk site (the area containing the potential for the highest concentration of alternative economic activity) that would be precluded by the development of the convention center. These economic impacts are then subtracted from the economic impact estimates from the convention center in order to provide a real or net economic impact estimate. This analysis is responsive to public scoping comments received from concerned citizens regarding a realistic inclusion of all costs associated with the proposed new convention center at this site; and
- A calculation of the net economic impacts on or benefits to the region associated with the various site options. This section presents an estimate of the annual public expenditures that would be required to generate the annual incremental economic impacts on or benefits to the region. This section provides an estimate of the economic return on the taxpayer's dollar associated with the various convention center alternatives.

4.3.1 Net Economic Impact Summary Related to the Justification of the Public Investment

This section is taken from the detailed economic and fiscal impact analysis presented in Appendix C. It is intended to provide the reader with a summary of project-related economic impacts. For

more detailed information on how these numbers were developed, see Appendix C.

In order to compare convention center alternatives and the net incremental economic impacts that were estimated for each option, estimated statewide economic benefits and the public-funding obligations associated with both the capital and operational financing needs of the centers and complementary headquarters-quality hotel were compared. Table 4-18 shows the relevant benefit and expenditure streams that were used in the net economic impact estimate.

Table 4-18 provides a public cost-benefit evaluation of the proposed convention center projects and compares the relevant benefits represented by annual statewide economic impacts (i.e., total industry output) to the public expenditures associated with delivering these benefits to the taxpayer and creating wealth in the region. The relevant public expenditures are derived from capital and operational costs associated with the convention center's annual operation. In addition, to be as comprehensive as possible, the estimated public subsidy for a 400-room headquarters-quality hotel is also included as a taxpayer-sourced expenditure.

The first row of Table 4-18 compares the annual statewide economic impacts (i.e., total industry output) expected from the convention center alternatives in a stable year of demand. The second row is an estimate of annual debt-service requirements that was calculated as equivalent to approximately 9.7% of total project

Table 4-18 Net Annual Impact Estimate ($ millions) - Year 2007

	Mohawk Site	Waterfront Site	Expansion Alternative
Annual economic impact (statewide)	$67.3	$49.9	$44.4
Approximate debt service requirement	$(15.0)	$(13.6)	$(15.3)
Operating deficit in a stabilized year	$2.7	$2.7	$2.8
Estimated HQ Hotel Financing Subsidy (per year)	$3.07	$3.07	$3.07
Total Estimated Annual Expenditure	$20.8	$19.4	$21.2
Net Annual Economic Impact	$46.5	$30.5	$23.2

costs less site acquisition. The third row shows an estimate of the operating deficit of the facility in a stable year of demand, 2007. The fourth row adds an estimate of the headquarters-quality hotel

funding gap from Table 4-18 above. The estimated funding gap is assumed to be non-site-specific, and it is also assumed that this gap will be met with public funds over a 10-year period. The fifth row shows the total public expenditures that would be associated with each convention center alternative.

The net annual economic impact comparisons demonstrate that the estimated public expenditures would achieve the greatest return on public investment from the Mohawk site alternative.
To reiterate, the main reasons for the differences in net economic impacts stem from the assumptions used that relate to attendance, direct spending per out-of-town delegate day, and relative expenditures, some of which flow from these assumptions. For the Waterfront site alternative, direct spending per out-of-town delegate day can be expected to be significantly less than the Mohawk site spending estimate because of the Waterfront site's remoteness from the CBD. In addition, the relative size of the capital costs also influences the above calculations of net economic impact.

Table 4-19 responds directly to citizen comments on the costs and benefits per job created associated with the convention center alternatives. Table 4-19 compares the total economic impact per job created to the public cost per job created. The net economic impact per job is the difference between the two. Economic impact is measured by total industry output per job created, while the public cost is represented by the public funding costs (both capital and operational) presented in Table 4-19.

Table 4-19 Calculation of Net Annual Economic Impact per Job Created for Convention Center Alternatives

	Mohawk Site	Waterfront Site	Expansion Alternative
Annual number of jobs created	857	636	566
Annual economic impact (output)	$67.3	$49.9	$44.4
Approximate debt service requirement	$(15.0)	$(13.6)	$(15.3)
Operating deficit in a stabilized year	$2.7	$2.7	$2.8
Estimated HQ Hotel Financing Subsidy	$3.07	$3.07	$3.07
Total Estimated Annual Expenditure	$20.8	$19.4	$21.2
Cost per job created from center operations	$24,271	$30,503	$37,456
Economic Impact per job created from center operations	$78,530	$78,459	$78,445
Net economic impact per job created	$54,259	$47,956	$40,989

Table 4-19 presents the total incremental number of jobs that would be created annually statewide from convention center operations and shows that the largest net economic impact per job would be generated by the Mohawk site alternative.

4.3.2 Modified No-Action Alternative

Under the Modified No-Action Alternative, the County would spend approximately $10 million to maintain the competitiveness of the existing convention center. The Modified No-Action Alternative is seen as a short-term (i.e., three-year to four-year) solution to offsetting declining usage of the existing convention center and stabilizing facility usage and attendance, without building a new convention center facility at this time. It should be noted that the Modified No-Action Alternative is a short-term measure to mitigate projected loss of market share and maintain current operating levels until a source of funding for expansion is identified.

While it will result in greater beneficial economic impacts than the current facility under the No-Action Alternative, the Modified No-Action Alternative would not result in the long-term positive economic benefits that would be attributable to the development of a new, expanded, state-of-the-art convention center.

4.4 Community Facilities and Services

The downtown Buffalo area is served by a full compliment of community facilities and services. Medical services, police, and fire protection in the general project area are described below.

4.4.1 Emergency Services

Police and fire services are provided by the City of Buffalo with backup services, as necessary, from the Erie County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Police Department. The project area is located within the jurisdiction of the Buffalo Police Department (PD) District B Headquarters, which is located on Main Street and Tupper Street in the City of Buffalo.

Fire protection in the vicinity of all three project sites is provided by the City of Buffalo Fire Department. The Fire Dispatch Center is currently located on the Mohawk site, with potential for relocation as Phase 2 of a project to be initiated in March 2002. First response capabilities are provided by Engine 1 and Hook and Ladder 2, located south of the Mohawk and Expansion sites and north of the Waterfront site at South Division and Ellicott Streets; and Engine 32 and Hook and Ladder 5, located at Seneca and Swan streets. Additional support is provided by Engine 2 and Hook and

Ladder 9-B56, located to the south at Elmwood Avenue and Virginia Street.

Full-time security is expected to be maintained at the chosen convention center site. Additional part-time security guards will be hired as needed for specific events scheduled for the convention center. As with activities at the existing center, overtime expenses may be incurred by the City of Buffalo Police Department due to an expected increase of activity from the proposed larger facility over and above those incurred due to existing Convention Center events.

No matter which site is selected, the proposed convention center will include fire protection equipment as required by applicable building and safety codes.

Since the Buffalo Fire Department is already equipped and manned to respond to emergencies in the existing convention center and downtown buildings of similar size, expenditures for additional equipment and manpower are not anticipated.

Mohawk Site

Infrastructure associated with the City of Buffalo Fire Dispatch Center located on Ellicott Street may be incorporated into the new convention center. This is considered a significant design challenge at the Mohawk Site, and will have to be addressed. However, Erie County recently commissioned a feasibility study for construction of a Central Police Service training facility, which includes relocation of the Fire Dispatch Center (Eszak 2001). This relocation would not affect the provision of emergency services. It would, however, greatly reduce existing design challenges posed by incorporating the existing Fire Dispatch Center into the new convention facility.

Should the Fire Dispatch Center remain on Ellicott Street, it is imperative that its operation not be hindered or disrupted during convention center construction and operation.

Construction and operation of the convention center at the Mohawk Site will not result in significant impacts on the provision of emergency services in downtown Buffalo.

Waterfront Site

The City of Buffalo Fire Dispatch Center is located on Ellicott Street, less than 1 mile from the Waterfront site. There are three fire stations in proximity to the Waterfront site.

Construction and operation of the convention center at the Waterfront site will not result in significant impacts on the provision of emergency services in downtown Buffalo

Existing Convention Center Expansion/Renovation

The existing convention center has fire protection equipment as required by applicable building and safety codes. Additional equipment will be included as needed to accommodate the proposed expansion/renovation. The City of Buffalo Fire Dispatch Center is located on Ellicott Street, which is in proximity to the expansion/renovation alternative, and there are three fire stations near the site.

Expansion of the existing convention center would not result in significant impacts on the provision of emergency services in downtown Buffalo.

4.4.2 Medical Services

Within the City of Buffalo, 14 major hospitals provide primary health care and related services. The High Street Medical Corridor, a conglomeration of health care facilities and services which includes Buffalo General Hospital and Roswell Park Cancer Institute, is located approximately 1 mile north of the Mohawk site.

All hospitals in Buffalo are part of the Emergency Medical Services program of Erie County. Within the Emergency Services Department, the Emergency Medical Services Division maintains a 24-hour medical-emergency radio system. Ambulances are assigned a radio frequency during any medical emergency and the Emergency Medical Services Division monitors the status of all ambulances, medical emergencies, and emergency rooms to ensure proper and expedient delivery and treatment of all medical emergencies.

No matter which site is selected, the proposed convention center will include a first aid center. In addition, all sites are in proximity to existing health care facilities in the City of Buffalo, which can adequately provide appropriate extended care services that may be required during the construction and operation phases of the project.

Because there is no population increase associated with the construction and operation of the proposed project, there should be no impact on the ability of existing health care facilities to effectively serve area residents and visitors.

4.5 Utilities and Infrastructure

All three alternative sites are currently serviced by all major utilities, including water, sanitary and storm sewers, and energy, provided by the City of Buffalo and private corporations. Utility facilities and infrastructure in the vicinity of each of the project sites are addressed below.

4.5.1 Water Supply

American Water Services, Inc., operates and maintains the water supply system for the city of Buffalo under contract with the Buffalo Water Board, which owns the water supply system. American Water Services, Inc., maintains Buffalo's 800 miles of water lines, servicing the City's 43 square miles.

Buffalo's water is drawn from Lake Erie through water intakes located about 6,000 feet offshore at the mouth of the Niagara River. From the intake point, water is gravity fed through a 12-foot by 12-foot conduit to the Colonel Ward Treatment Plant and pumping station at the foot of Porter Avenue in LaSalle Park. Excess capacity currently exists at the treatment plant and pumping station and water quality is generally good and complies with all regulations. The City's water system has a total capacity of 160 million gallons per day (mgd); the average city-wide consumption is roughly 100 mgd. The Massachusetts Avenue pumping station, located along the Niagara Section of Interstate 190, functions as the emergency backup system for the Colonel Ward system. It has a capacity of 160 mgd.

Mohawk Site

In the immediate vicinity of the Mohawk site, the City maintains 4-, 6-, 10-, 12-, and 36-inch diameter water lines within the Main, Washington, Ellicott, Mohawk, and East Huron streets right-of-ways (see Figure 4-7). These water lines service all of the structures in the vicinity of the project area and operate under 100 pounds per square inch (psi) of pressure.

Waterfront Site

In the vicinity of the Waterfront site, the City maintains 12-inch diameter water lines within the Washington, Perry, Michigan, and Scott Streets right-of-ways (see Figure 4-8). Multiple 6-inch to 8-inch diameter lines are located along Indiana Street, Illinois Street, Columbia Street, and South Park Avenue. One major 48-inch water main is also located in the area, running along Main

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Fig4-7.CDR-2/5/02-GRA

SOURCE: City of Buffalo Sewer Authority; City of Buffalo Water Department; National Fuel Gas Corp; Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.

SCALE
0 100 200 Feet

Figure 4-7 EXISTING UTILITIES MOHAWK SITE

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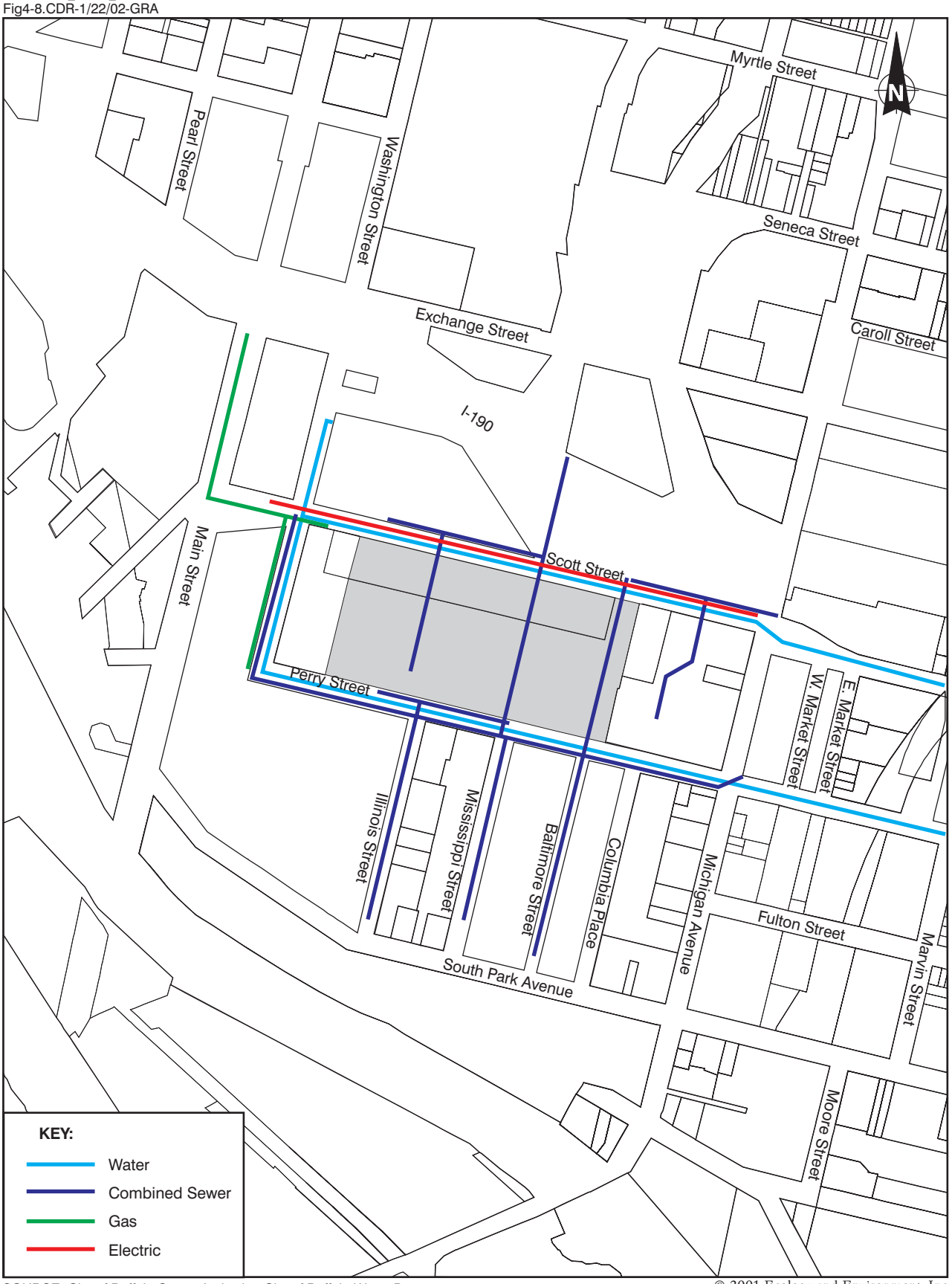
Fig4-8.CDR-1/22/02-GRA



SOURCE: City of Buffalo Sewer Authority; City of Buffalo Water Department; National Fuel Gas Corp; Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.

SCALE
0 200 400 Feet

Figure 4-8 EXISTING UTILITIES WATERFRONT SITE

and Perry streets. This main is the primary conduit for water supply to South Buffalo.

Existing Convention Center Site

In the immediate vicinity of the existing convention center site, the City maintains 12-inch diameter water lines within the Pearl, Franklin, and Huron streets right-of-ways (see Figure 4-9). An additional 36-inch main runs along Court Street between Franklin to Main streets. These water lines service all of the structures in the vicinity of the project area and operate under 100 psi.

4.5.2 Sanitary and Storm Sewer Systems

The Buffalo Sewer Authority operates and maintains the City of Buffalo sanitary and storm sewer systems at the Bird Island Wastewater Treatment Plan on the southern end of Squaw Island. The City's system, comprised of over 800 miles of pipe, also services all or parts of seven towns and two villages. The City's sewer system is a combined system, receiving and treating both domestic sewage and stormwater runoff in the same pipes. The system's average maximum treatment capacity is 180 mgd, with City-wide wastewater treatment loads averaging 165 mgd. The maximum flow during heavy rainfall events that can be accommodated at the facility is 360 mgd.

Similar to the city water system, most of the sanitary and storm sewer lines associated with the existing system are antiquated (93% of all sanitary storm sewers were installed before 1941). The City is continuously upgrading and repairing sewer lines to maintain the overall adequacy of the city sewer system.

Mohawk Site

In the immediate vicinity of the Mohawk site, the City maintains combined sewers only with 6-, 12-, and 24-inch diameters (see Figure 4-7). These combined sewers service all of the structures in the vicinity of the project area.

Waterfront Site

In the immediate vicinity of the Waterfront site, the City maintains both storm and combined sewers with 10-, 12-, 15-, 24-, and 30-inch diameters (see Figure 4-8). These storm and combined sewers service all of the structures in the vicinity of the project area.

Existing Convention Center Site

In the immediate vicinity of the existing convention center site, the City maintains combined sewers with 18-, 24-, and 36-inch diameters (see Figure 4-9). These combined sewers service all of the

structures in the vicinity of the project area and have adequate capacity to accommodate additional sewage flow.

4.5.3 Solid Waste

The refuse collection system in the City of Buffalo is managed by the Department of Public Works, Division of Streets Sanitation. Municipal solid wastes are collected curb-side by City personnel and deposited at one of two transfer stations. Non-recyclable wastes are then transported by private hauler to a facility in Niagara Falls, New York, or disposed of at a solid waste landfill.

4.5.4 Energy

Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation supplies electricity to the City of Buffalo. The Niagara Mohawk distribution system consists of underground pipelines. Two steam generating plants supply electricity for most industrial and commercial uses, while residential electricity demands are met from two state-owned hydroelectric generating facilities in Niagara Falls, New York. The Niagara Mohawk system cumulatively has a total capacity of over 7.5 million kilowatts (Niagara Mohawk 1999).

Figures 4-7 through 4-9 illustrates the electrical distribution lines within each of the project locations.

Natural gas is provided to the proposed project areas by the National Fuel Gas Supply Company (National). The distribution systems in the vicinity of the three proposed sites consist of lines that surround each area (see Figures 4-7 through 4-9).

4.5.6 Buffalo Convention Center Utility Usage

The Buffalo Convention Center obtains utilities from National Fuel Resources, Niagara Mohawk, Niagara Mohawk Energy, and the City of Buffalo Division of Water. Costs for these utilities fluctuate throughout the year and between years depending on a variety of cost drivers.

Gas for heating the existing convention center is supplied by National Fuel Resources. During the winter of 2000/2001 gas use was significantly higher than the previous two winters, due to the duration and severity of low temperatures. For the year 2000, the Buffalo Convention Center used approximately 4672.2 million cubic feet (MCF) of gas to heat the facility.

The City of Buffalo supplies water to the Buffalo Convention Center and usage is fairly even despite the number of events per

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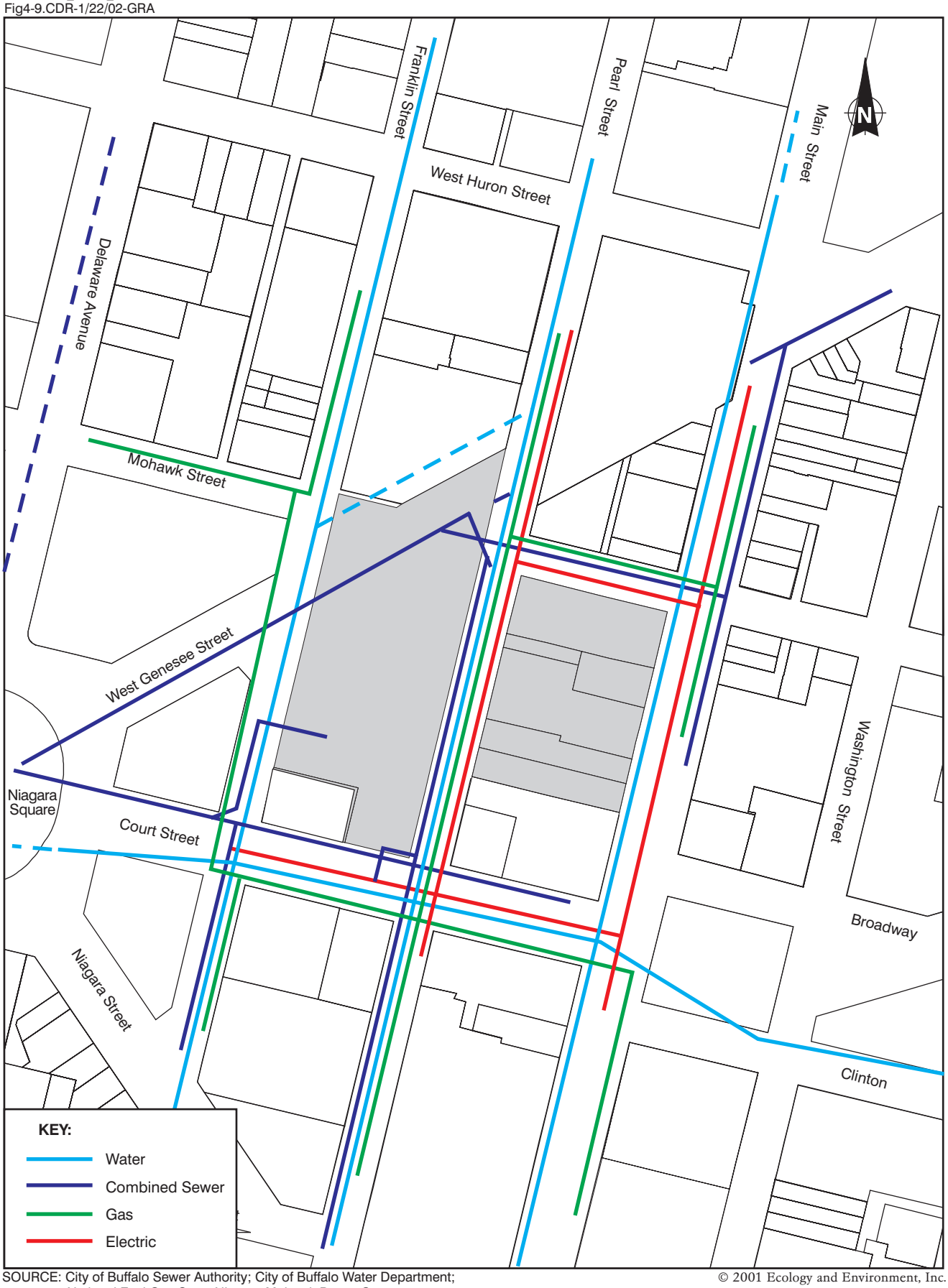

SOURCE: City of Buffalo Sewer Authority; City of Buffalo Water Department; National Fuel Gas Corp; Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.

SCALE
0 100 200 Feet

Figure 4-9 EXISTING UTILITIES EXISTING CONVENTION CENTER SITE

year. Water consumption for fiscal year (FY) 2000 totaled 4.5 million gallons or 12,595 gallons per day (Comestock 2001).

The Buffalo Convention Center is provided electrical service by Niagara Mohawk, with usage mainly driven by the business activity for that month and year. When there is a higher number of events, electrical usage increases and the expense is substantially higher. In 1998 the Buffalo Convention Center obtained a loan through Niagara Mohawk Energy Marketing (Plum Street) for electrical upgrades. It is estimated that these improvements are saving the center between $80,000 to $100,000 per year. For the year 2000, Niagara Mohawk and Niagara Mohawk Energy Marketing supplied the Buffalo Convention Center with 2,137,755 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity.

4.5.7 Impacts

Utility requirements for operation of a new or expanded convention center were projected based on FY 2000 utility usage data for the existing convention center facility. The projections take into consideration the increased square footage of a new or expanded center and increased number of attendees expected at the new or expanded convention center. Projected utility usage was then compared to existing utilities and infrastructure servicing the identified project alternatives to determine their ability to accommodate the proposed project.

Impacts on water, sanitary sewer, and power systems from construction of a 400-room headquarters quality hotel are also provided in this section.

Water Supply

The City of Buffalo's water system has a total capacity of 160 mgd; the average city-wide consumption is roughly 100 mgd.

Water consumption for the existing convention center for FY 2000 was 12,595 gpd. Based on current consumption, projected water usage for a new or expanded convention center is estimated to be 19,035 gpd. In addition, based on water usage at a similar-sized hotel, it is estimated that approximately 65,000 gpd would be consumed at a new 400-room hotel.

The City of Buffalo water treatment plant currently operates at approximately 62.5 % capacity. With unused capacity of this magnitude, the increased water consumption from the proposed project will have no significant impacts on the City's water treatment system. In addition, although some resizing of water lines may need

to occur, adequate flow and pressure are present in each of the project areas to accommodate the proposed project.

It is anticipated that during the convention center design and construction processes several issues must also be addressed to minimize impacts on the existing water system regardless of the alternative selected. This includes protection of existing water mains during construction; analysis of existing mains that will be cut off and eliminated; and approximate number of additional hydrants that will be required to provide adequate fire suppression for the area.

Sanitary and Storm Sewer Systems

The City of Buffalo sewer system's average maximum treatment capacity is 180 mgd, with city-wide wastewater treatment loads averaging 165 mgd. The maximum flow during heavy rainfall events that can be accommodated at the facility is 360 mgd. Convention center and hotel waste load quantities generally reflect the water consumption rates for the facility with slight variations. For the purposes of this analysis, sanitary waste loads are estimated to total approximately 80% of water consumption. Therefore, the projected sanitary waste flow loads from the convention center will be approximately 15,228 gpd and 52,000 gpd for a 400-room hotel.

The City of Buffalo wastewater treatment plant currently operates at approximately 91.6% capacity. Although resizing of the required sewer mains will be need to be addressed during detailed engineering and design phases of the project, adequate pressure and flow is present within the system. Unused capacity is present within the City's treatment plant to handle the increased waste load generated from the proposed project at all three alternatives.

In addition, to minimize impacts on the existing sewer system, the following must be identified during design and construction: specific locations where sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff will be conveyed; existing sewers that are proposed to be abandoned and resulting impacts on existing users; and impacts of additional or reconfigured flows to the sewer system.

Solid Waste

Solid waste generated during the operation of the new or expanded convention center facility will collected by the City of Buffalo Department of Public Works, Streets Sanitation Division. The City is currently collecting debris within each of the project areas, therefore, no significant impacts are anticipated with regard to trash collection. In addition, construction of a new or expanded conven-

tion center would not have a significant impact on the City of Buffalo's ability to process debris at its solid waste landfill or two transfer stations.

Energy

Operation of a convention center, hotel, and associated facilities will cause a minor increase in demand on the energy resources available in downtown Buffalo. Niagara Mohawk and National Fuel Gas have indicated that the existing systems in each of the project areas will be adequate for supplying the electrical and gas demands of the proposed facilities without negatively impact surrounding uses. Therefore, no adverse impacts are expected as a result of the proposed project.

4.6 Air Quality

This section identifies all of the potential significant air quality impacts from the proposed new convention center, including the direct and indirect effects. Direct effects are caused by emissions from stationary sources on the project site, such as emissions from fuel burned on site for heating and cooling systems. Indirect effects result from emissions from motor vehicles traveling to and from the project site.

4.6.1 Criteria Pollutants and Air Quality Standards

EPA, under the requirements of the 1970 Clean Air Act (CAA), as amended in 1977 and 1990, has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six air contaminants, referred to as *criteria pollutants* (40 CFR 50). These are carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM_{10}), lead (Pb), and sulfur dioxide (SO_2).

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless and odorless gas that is produced in urban environments mainly from the incomplete combustion of gasoline and other fossil fuels. A main source of CO emissions is motor vehicles. CO concentrations can vary greatly over relatively short distances. Elevated concentrations generally occur along heavily traveled and congested roadways. CO concentrations must be determined on a localized basis.

Nitrogen Oxides, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), and Ozone

Nitrogen oxides and VOCs are of concern because of their role as precursors in the formation of photochemical oxidants, such as ozone. Ozone is formed through a series of reactions that take

place in the atmosphere in the presence of sunlight. Because the reactions are slow and occur as the pollutants are diffusing downwind, elevated ozone levels often are found many miles from sources of nitrogen oxides and VOCs. The effects of nitrogen oxides, VOCs, and ozone therefore are analyzed on a regional basis, particularly when a project would have regional or national significance.

Respirable and Fine Particulates – PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$

Particulates less than 10 microns in diameter (PM_{10}) have become a primary concern because they are respirable. EPA also has determined that elevated levels of fine particulate matter less than 2.5 microns ($PM_{2.5}$) in diameter show consistent associations with health effects. Particulate matter is emitted into the atmosphere from a variety of sources, such as industrial facilities, power plants, and construction activity. Diesel-powered vehicles, especially heavy trucks and buses, emit particulates, and therefore, respirable particulates may be present along heavily traveled roadways.

Sulfur Dioxide

Sulfur dioxide (SO_2) emissions are associated mainly with the combustion of sulfur-containing fuels, particularly oil and coal. No significant quantities are emitted from mobile sources.

The NAAQS include primary and secondary standards for these criteria pollutants. The primary standards are levels sufficient to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety. The secondary standards are levels sufficient to protect the public welfare from the adverse effects associated with pollutants in the ambient air. The primary and secondary standards are presented in Table 4-20.

The Clean Air Act requires EPA to review scientific data every five years to ensure that the NAAQS effectively protect public health. On July 18, 1997, EPA proposed a new standard for particulate matter. The standard for PM_{10} remains essentially unchanged, while a new standard for fine particles ($PM_{2.5}$) was proposed with an annual limit of 15 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$) and a 24-hour limit of 65 $\mu g/m^3$.

EPA recently enacted a more stringent standard for ozone, which updated the ozone standard from 0.12 ppm measured over 1 hour to a standard of 0.08 ppm measured over 8 hours, with the average fourth-highest concentration over a three-year period to determine whether an area is in compliance.

Table 4-20 National and New York State Ambient Air Quality Standards

Pollutant and Average Time	Primary Standard[1]	Secondary Standard[1]
Carbon Monoxide		
1-Hour Maximum	40,000 (35 ppm)[2]	40,000 (35 ppm)[2]
8-Hour Maximum	10,000 (9 ppm)[2]	10,000 (9 ppm)[2]
Nitrogen Dioxide		
Annual Arithmetic Mean	100	100
Ozone		
1-Hour Maximum	0.12 ppm[3]	0.12 ppm[3]
8-Hour Maximum[7]	0.08 ppm	0.08 ppm
Particulate Matter		
PM_{10}		
24-Hour Maximum	150[4]	150[4]
Annual Arithmetic Mean	50	50
$PM_{2.5}$ 24-Hour Maximum	65	65
Annual Arithmetic Mean	15	15
TSP (New York State Only)	250	—
24-Hour Maximum	75	—
Annual Arithmetic Mean		
Lead		
Quarterly Arithmetic Mean	1.5[5]	1.5[5]
Sulfur Dioxide		
3-Hour Maximum		1,300
24-Hour Maximum	365[2]	—
Annual Arithmetic Mean	80[2]	—

Source: 40 CFR 50 (EPA 1993).

Notes:
1. All concentrations in micrograms per cubic meter of air ($\mu g/m^3$) or, except where noted, in parts per million (ppm).
2. Not to be exceeded more than once per year.
3. Expected number of exceedances shall not be more than once per year (three-year average).
4. Standard attained when annual highest 99th percentile of 24-hour concentration over three years is below 150 mg/m^3.
5. The quarterly lead standard is not to be exceeded during any calendar quarter.
6. PM_{10} - particulate matter with diameter of 10 microns or less.
7. Standard attained when three-year average of annual fourth-highest daily maximum 8-hour value is less than 0.08.

NYSDEC has adopted the EPA NAAQS as the statewide ambient air quality standards. When EPA amended the standard for particulate matter and changed the regulated pollutants from Total Suspended Particulate (TSP) to PM_{10}, NYSDEC adopted the PM_{10} standard but continued to use PM_{10} and TSP as monitoring indicators for the levels of particulate matter. Therefore, the NYSDEC ambient air quality standards include all of the NAAQS, including a standard for TSP.

NYSDEC maintains an air quality monitoring station network to continuously monitor the criteria air pollutants and other air toxins throughout New York State. The most recent available air quality monitoring results from the monitoring sites closest to downtown Buffalo or most representative of the project site are listed in Table 4-21.

Table 4-21 Existing Air Quality Monitoring Data

Pollutants	Monitoring Station	Averaging Period	Concentration
Sulfur Dioxide	Buffalo (Dingens Street)	Annual 3 hour 24 hour	0.007 ppm (0.03 ppm) 0.061 ppm (0.5 ppm) 0.020 ppm (0.14 ppm)
Inhalable Particulates (PM_{10})	Buffalo (Dingens Street)	Annual 24 hour	22 $\mu g/m^3$ (50 $\mu g/m^3$) 51 $\mu g/m^3$ (150 $\mu g/m^3$)
TSP	Buffalo (Dingens Street)	Annual 24 hour	35 mg/m^3 (75 $\mu g/m^3$) 89 mg/m^3 (250 $\mu g/m^3$)
Ozone	Amherst	1 hour	0.028 ppm (0.12 ppm)
Lead	Buffalo (Elmwood Avenue)	Quarterly	0.04 $\mu g/m^3$ (1.5 $\mu g/m^3$)
Carbon Monoxide	Buffalo (Downtown)	1 hour 8 hour	5.0 ppm (35 ppm) 2.8 ppm (9 ppm)
Nitrogen Dioxide	Buffalo (Dingens Street)	Annual	0.021 ppm (0.05 ppm)

Note: Number in parentheses represents applicable NAAQS or NYAAQS.

There were no exceedances of NAAQS or New York State Ambient Air Quality Standards (NYAAQS) during 1998 at the listed monitoring sites.

4.6.2 Potential Stationary Source Air Quality Impacts During Operation

Mohawk Site

The Mohawk site is approximately 11 acres in size. The project area includes existing uses such as manufacturing and industrial uses.

Although specific site plans have not been designed, for analysis purposes, it has been assumed that the proposed convention center will utilize steam for its heating and hot water systems. Therefore, there will not be any dust, fumes, gas, mist, odor, smoke, vapor, pollen, toxic, or deleterious emissions in quantities that can be detected beyond the site boundaries. As a result, there will be no im-

pacts from stationary source emissions on existing air quality during operation.

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site property is a 10.4-acre property that is vacant and used as a surface parking lot.

Although specific site plans have not been designed, for analysis purposes, it has been assumed that the proposed convention center will utilize steam for its heating and hot water systems. Therefore, there will not be any dust, fumes, gas, mist, odor, smoke, vapor, pollen, toxic, or deleterious emissions in quantities that can be detected beyond the site boundaries. As a result, there will be no impacts from stationary source emissions on existing air quality during operation.

Existing Convention Center Renovation/Expansion

Although specific site plans have not been designed, for analysis purposes, it has been assumed that the proposed convention center will utilize steam for its heating and hot water systems. Therefore, there will not be any dust, fumes, gas, mist, odor, smoke, vapor, pollen, toxic, or deleterious emissions in quantities that can be detected beyond the site boundaries. As a result, there will be no impacts from stationary source emissions on existing air quality during operation.

No-Action Alternatives

Implementation of either the No-Action Alternative or the Modified No-Action Alternative assumes that a new convention center would not be built at either the Mohawk or Waterfront sites and that the existing convention center would not be expanded. Implementation of either alternative would not result in any increase in potential stationary source air impacts.

4.6.5 Potential Mobile Source Air Quality Impacts

The operation of the proposed convention center at either of the alternative sites will result in long-term incremental impacts to air quality at certain localized intersections in the vicinity of the sites. Because increased mobile source emissions would be associated with vehicular traffic, the primary air quality impact will be associated with increases in CO emissions at intersections used by convention center traffic. Conversely, street intersections used by traffic associated with the existing convention center would experience a decrease in local CO emissions because of the shift of traffic to the new facility. Because most of the traffic that will go to/from the new convention center simply will be shifted from the existing

facility location to a new location in downtown Buffalo, it has been concluded that there would be no increase in NO_x or VOC levels because there would be an insignificant change in vehicle miles traveled.

The basis for the discussion of air quality impacts is the traffic and parking study found in Appendix D. The traffic and parking study identified existing traffic conditions, and compared "Build" and "No Build" modeled results for the AM Peak (7 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.) and the PM peak (2 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.) for the Estimated Time of Completion (ETC) of the convention center, as well as ETC + 5 yrs (see Table 4-1 of Appendix D).

The information used in this traffic and subsequent air quality analysis is based on the worst-case scenario of a major event being conducted in the proposed convention center on a weekday simultaneously with an event occurring at Dunn Tire Park. In addition, it should be noted that the existing and future intersection traffic volumes used for the analysis were based on weekday peak-hour values, the hours during which fewer than 20% of the convention center events for the 2000 season took place. It also should be noted that the largest volume of attendance at events at the existing convention center occurs on weekends, when downtown business-related traffic is minimal.

Detailed air quality impacts and resulting effective mitigation measures cannot be determined until the design of a proposed convention center has progressed to the point where specific ingress/egress points for vehicular parking and truck loading/unloading are known. Once these specific ingress/egress points are known and the specific amount of on-site parking has been determined, the location of the off-site parking garage has been identified, and the location/layout of the headquarters hotel is determined, more detailed and meaningful air quality analysis can be undertaken.

Mohawk Site

The traffic and parking study indicates that under the "No Build" scenario, traffic will increase in intersections near the Mohawk site over the period from ETC (i.e., 2007) to ETC + 5 yrs. It is projected that intersection Level of Service (LOS) will continue to decrease, reaching LOS F at North Oak and Genesee Streets in ETC + 5 yrs., even if the convention center is not built. Operation of the proposed convention center would worsen the projected situation slightly (i.e., intersection LOS), particularly for the AM Peak period. For the Washington and Chippewa intersection, the LOS

would change from C to E under the "No Build" condition for the AM Peak hour. Again, operation of the proposed convention center would worsen the projected situation slightly (i.e., intersection LOS), particularly for the AM Peak period.

No street intersections are projected to have an increase in traffic greater than 10% under the "Build" scenario. For intersections that would see a decrease in LOS (which may imply an increase in CO emissions related to vehicular traffic by ETC + 5 yrs.), the decreased LOS and CO emission increase are equally due to projected increases in "No Build" traffic and the projected increases due to the proposed convention center. Even if the proposed convention center is not built at the Mohawk site, some improvements will have to be made to facilitate improved traffic flow at several intersections. Improved traffic flow will result in lower CO emissions.

Detailed air quality impacts and resulting effective mitigation measures cannot be determined until the design of the proposed convention center has progressed to the point where specific ingress/egress points for vehicular parking and truck loading/unloading are known. Once these specific ingress/egress points are known, the specific amount of on-site parking has been determined, the location of the off-site parking garage has been identified, and the details of the headquarters hotel at the Niagara Mohawk Building are determined, more detailed and meaningful air quality analysis can be undertaken.

Truck traffic associated with loading/unloading activities will result in emissions of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$. It is assumed that 15 truck loading/unloading docks will be required; however, the location of these docks and how trucks will have to access them in an efficient manner cannot be determined until the final design is underway. It is likely that there will be a truck staging area close to the proposed convention center where trucks can be staged (i.e., parked) to coordinate loading and unloading of cargo. Once this site has been identified, additional air quality analysis may be necessary, particularly if the staging area or truck access routes are in or through residential areas east of the Elm-Oak Corridor.

Waterfront Site

The traffic and parking study indicates that even under the "No Build" scenario, traffic will increase in intersections near the Waterfront site over the period from ETC (i.e., 2007) to ETC + 5 yrs. It is projected that intersection Level of Service (LOS) will decrease slightly from LOS A to B at Washington and Perry Streets,

and at Michigan and South Park Avenue in the ETC + 5 yrs. Operation of the proposed convention center would worsen the projected situation slightly to an LOS C at Washington and Perry Streets for the PM Peak period only. These changes in LOS indicate that air quality at these intersections would not be affected significantly.

Based on the traffic and parking study, the intersections of Washington/Scott and Washington/Perry will see a 10% and 14% increase in traffic in the worst-case scenario, respectively. These traffic volume increases are associated with LOS changes from A to B and A to C, and thus are not considered to result in a significant increase in CO or other air quality emissions.

Renovation/Expansion of the Existing Convention Center

The traffic and parking study indicates that there is no difference between the "Build" and "No Build" scenarios as far as intersection LOS. All intersections will operate under similar and acceptable LOS under the "Build" or "No Build" to ETC + 5 yrs.

No intersection would see a traffic increase of more than 8% in the worst-case scenario. Thus, this is not considered to result in a significant increase in CO or other air quality emissions.

No-Action Alternatives

Implementation of the No-Action Alternative assumes that a new convention center would not be built at either the Mohawk or Waterfront sites and that the existing convention center would not be renovated or expanded. Because of the projected decline in facility usage and attendance that will occur without facility upgrades, improvements, and/or expansion, traffic and resulting air quality impacts also would decrease from current levels. Thus, air quality in downtown Buffalo theoretically would improve under this scenario.

Implementation of the Modified No-Action Alternative assumes that a new convention center would not be built at either the Mohawk or Waterfront sites, but that the existing convention center would be renovated. Because the intent is to minimize the projected reduction of facility usage associated with the No-Action Alternative and maintain current market share (at best), a slight reduction in mobile source air emissions would result. No additional traffic or parking would be generated beyond what currently exists. Therefore, implementation of this alternative would not result in any increase in mobile source air impacts but more realis-

tically would result in a slight reduction in current CO emissions related to vehicular traffic.

4.7 Noise

4.7.1 Introduction

Noise is generally defined as sound with intensity greater than the ambient or background sound pressure level (SPL). SPL is determined by measuring noise emissions in terms of sound pressure in a relationship defined as a decibel (dB). The A-weighted decibel (dB[A]) scale is commonly used to describe environmental noise. The A-weighted scale simulates the variation in frequency throughout the audible range of typical healthy human hearing.

Noise pollution can come from many sources, such as noise from emergency vehicle sirens, garbage collection operations, and construction and maintenance operations. Other sources, such as traffic, stem from the movement of people and goods, activities that are essential to the viability of the city as a place to live and do business. Although these and other noise-producing activities are necessary to a city, the noise they produce is undesirable. Existing noise levels within the downtown Buffalo area are typical of an urban commercial environment in which noise levels are highly variable with time and are determined primarily by automobile, bus, and truck traffic movements.

Quantitative information on the effects of noise on people is well documented. If sufficiently loud, noise may adversely affect people in several ways. For example, noise may interfere with human activities, such as sleep, speech communication, and tasks requiring coordination or communication. It may also cause annoyance, hearing damage, and other physiological damage. Several noise scales and rating methods are used to quantify the effects of noise on people. These scales and methods consider such factors as loudness, duration, time of occurrence, and changes in noise level with time. However, it must be considered that all the stated effects of noise on people vary greatly between individual persons.

A noise-sensitive receptor (NSA) is a home, church, hospital, school, park, or any location where people reside or congregate. Field surveys of the project area and reviews of local maps indicate that there are very few sensitive receptors contiguous to the three project sites. The following are the site-specific sensitive receptors for each of the three sites.

4.7.2 Existing Conditions

Mohawk Site

The Mohawk site occupies approximately 11 acres and is bounded by Main Street on the west, Oak Street on the east, Huron Street on the north, and Broadway to the south. Due to the urban and heavily developed nature of the site, noise is generated on and within this site on a daily basis.

There are no NSA's within 500 feet of the Mohawk site.

The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library is located adjacent to the southern portion of the Mohawk site. Buffalo Alternative High School is located within 600 feet north of the Mohawk site. Fountain Plaza, which contains a public skating rink, Rotary Rink, is west of the Mohawk project site. In addition, St. Michael's, St. Joseph's church, and a Baptist church are within 1,200 feet of the Mohawk site.

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site property is a 10.4-acre property that is currently vacant and used as a surface parking lot. Noise sources in the area include traffic (including the elevated portion of Interstate 190) and manufacturing uses.

There are no NSA's within 500 feet of the Waterfront site.

Existing Convention Center Expansion/Renovation

The site consists of the existing convention center and the expansion location consists of vacant buildings, commercial buildings, offices, and restaurants/bars.

The Theater District's Ansonia Building is located at the intersection of Main and Tupper streets and contains some high-end residential units. Luxury units and condominiums are also found in City Centre, on the southwest corner of Main Street.

The site is currently urban and heavily developed. No NSA's are located within 500 feet of the existing convention center site.

4.7.3 Potential Noise Impacts

Mohawk Site

Noise will be generated during demolition and construction activities, however this will be intermittent and short term in duration,

and will occur during the day when sensitivity to noise levels is the lowest.

Although some additional traffic will result from operation of the convention center, this will not result in a significant increase in noise levels over current levels.

Waterfront Site

Noise will be generated during construction activities, however this will be intermittent and short term in duration, and will occur during the day when sensitivity to noise levels is the lowest.

Although some additional traffic will result from operation of the convention center, this will not result in a significant increase in noise levels over current levels.

Expansion/Renovation of the Existing Convention Center

Noise will be generated during demolition and construction activities, however this will be intermittent and short term in duration, and will occur during the day when sensitivity to noise levels is the lowest.

Although some additional traffic will result from operation of the convention center, this will not result in a significant increase in noise levels over current levels.

No-Action Alternative

Implementation of this alternative would not result in any potential noise impacts.

4.8 Cultural Resources

This section summarizes the results of a cultural resources documentary background survey of the proposed convention center sites. A more detailed account of the archeological and historical record of the area is presented in Appendix B, the Phase IA Cultural Resource Survey for the Proposed Convention Center Site and SHPO Correspondence. All relevant correspondence regarding the historic or archaeological investigation of the site, as referenced herein, is also included in Appendix B.

The purpose of the survey was to identify any previously recorded archaeological or historic resources that may be impacted by the proposed construction of the project and to assess the likelihood that unrecorded resources may be present at the three proposed site

locations for the new convention center. The investigation included a site file and literature check, archival and documentary research, a site inspection visit, and photographic documentation of structures within the three proposed site locations.

The cultural resource investigation was conducted in compliance with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the State Historic Preservation Act (SHPA), and all relevant federal legislation. The investigation was also conducted according to the New York Archaeological Council's (NYAC) Standards for Archaeological Investigations.

The first part of this section presents a review of the literature on the history of the area, with particular mention of the three sites. The potential impacts on archaeological and historic resources are then described for each site alternative, followed by recommendations for further study and potential mitigation measures.

4.8.1 Impacts: Archaeological Impacts Assessment

Little evidence of prehistoric sites remains within the city due to almost 200 years of construction and urban development. The extensive disturbance and earth movement has largely destroyed any potential for locating intact prehistoric resources. Subsequent commercial and industrial activities, including construction of infrastructure, have resulted in severe and extensive disturbance of all three proposed alternative sites. Based on this extensive prior disturbance, the prehistoric sensitivity and the probability of discovering intact prehistoric cultural resources at any of the sites are very low.

Mohawk Site

The Mohawk site has been densely occupied by commercial and residential structures since the mid-nineteenth century. The Mohawk site has a high potential for historic archaeological sensitivity in locations where buildings have been removed. For the most part, nineteenth-century structures were replaced by the construction of larger commercial buildings in the early-to-mid twentieth century. However, the area between Ellicott and Oak streets once contained dense blocks of brick and/or frame dwellings. Historic map analysis of this area indicates that there are few less-disturbed locations where the possibility for encountering mid-nineteenth century dwellings is high. One location is in the northeast corner of the Mohawk site, which is presently a parking lot.

In general, there is a high likelihood that buried cultural deposits may be present at various locations throughout the site. Based on

the archival and cartographic research, it has been determined that the Mohawk site has a high to moderate probability of containing buried historic deposits throughout the property. These resources may consist of structural remains and associated features of residential and commercial buildings, as well as historic middens and associated artifacts. Phase IB subsurface investigations are recommended at the site before any earth movement or construction is initiated.

Waterfront Site

Prior to the rise of major industry in this section of the city the Waterfront site was mostly residential with brick and frame dwellings occupied by Italian and Irish immigrants, a school house, stores, and manufacturing complexes. The area currently consists of an asphalt parking lot. The site was densely occupied during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the structures were demolished, the potential for the existence of buried deposits is high. It is unlikely that construction of the parking lot seriously impacted all previously existing buried historic resources at the site. Based on archival and map research and general impacts associated with parking lot construction, the Waterfront site has a high potential for archaeological sensitivity. A Phase IB investigation is recommended throughout the property before any earth movement or construction is initiated.

Existing Convention Center Site

The existing convention center currently occupies more than half of the site. Earlier structures within the footprint of the structure were demolished during construction of the present facility (ca. 1978). The extent of disturbance to historic resources in this area is significant. In general, the historic archaeological sensitivity is low for the existing convention center building site since the construction of the existing structure probably destroyed any remains of structures once present at the current convention center site.

The portion of the site located east of Pearl Street has or once had structures on it. This area is historically sensitive and Phase IB testing is recommended in locations where previous structures existed. In addition, plank and log road remains have been discovered below the current street surfaces in Buffalo (Keller et al. 1981; HAA 2000). If road construction or excavations are associated with this site, the possibility of uncovering remains of a log road should be investigated before construction in these areas is initiated. The sensitivity of the complete site is low (location of existing convention center) to moderate (location of site east of Pearl Street).

4.8.2 Impacts: Historic Impacts Assessment

For a cultural resource to be considered for eligibility to the NRHP it must be evaluated within its historic context and demonstrated to be significant for one or more of the four Criteria of Evaluation (36 CFR 60) as outlined in the National Park Service publication *Guidelines for Local Surveys*: *A Basis for Preservation Planning* (National Register Bulletin 15). Those properties that appeared to exhibit the appropriate qualities required for eligibility to the National Register were identified in the field.

Mohawk Site

Several National Register-listed and/or eligible properties are within the immediate viewshed of the Mohawk site. Two National Register-listed properties, the Buffalo Savings Bank (ca. 1900-1901) and the Niagara Mohawk Building (ca. 1912) lie immediately north of the northern limits of the Mohawk site. The L. L. Berger Building, an NRE property, is located on the west side of Main Street directly across from the Mohawk site. The southern boundaries of the Mohawk site are within the immediate viewshed of Lafayette Square, which includes the Soldiers and Sailors Monument (ca. 1882). Lafayette Square is considered the second most important public space in downtown Buffalo (Buffalo Arch. Guidebook Co. 1981:88). NRL/NRE buildings surrounding the square that are within the viewshed of the southern limits of the Mohawk site include: the Lafayette Hotel (ca. 1904), the Rand Building (ca. 1929), the Liberty Building, and the Brisbane Building (ca. 1895). Also of note, the Mohawk site is one block south of the southern limits of the Theater Historic Preservation District.

As a result of the Phase IA (see Appendix B), the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation has determined that five properties on the Mohawk site were identified as listed and/or eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and that several properties are considered to be contributing to the NRHP-Eligible 500 Block Historic District.

OPRHP has determined that the following historic properties are potentially significant, that impacts to these structures must be considered in the early planning stages, and that alternatives that would avoid or reduce impacts to these properties will have to be explored (Lord 2001):

36 (a.k.a.: 38) Broadway, Buehl Block (USN 02940.003122). This late nineteenth century Second Empire-style commercial building is eligible for the State and/or National Register as a sur-

viving example of its type and for its association with Charles Burchfield (1893-1967), a noted artist who worked for a local wallpaper company, H. Birge & Sons.

321 Ellicott Street. The main building of the Ferguson Electric complex is State and/or National Register-eligible as a good representative example of a late nineteenth century (ca. 1892) commercial building and for its association with the electric industry in the City of Buffalo. This three-story commercial building features largely intact Queen Anne detailing on its upper floors, though its original storefront has been altered.

465 Washington Street (USN 02940.003047). The ca. 1909-1911 Sinclair Building (a.k.a. Remington-Rand Building) at 465 Washington Street is State and/or National Register-eligible as a good representative example of a largely intact early twentieth century commercial building and for its association with one of the city's leading architectural firms of the period, Esenwein and Johnson.

501 Washington Street. The ca. 1923-1924 George Washington Building (Holling Press Building) is State and/or National Register-eligible as an excellent example of an early twentieth century loft with a reinforced concrete frame and for its association with the city's printing industry. The Washington Building is architecturally distinguished by its finely articulated brick masonry facade. Designed by architects Hudson and Hudson, the architectural features of their decorative four-bay-wide facade conveys the massiveness and form of this ten-story loft space.

In addition, 515-517, 523, 525, 529, 535, and 537 Main Street; 11 Genesee Street; and 504 Washington Street are contributing to the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District.

504 Washington Street (USN 00940.003054). This late nineteenth century Italianate-style commercial building is potentially eligible as a contributing component of the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District. Presently, the contributing properties of the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District are confined to the west side of Main Street, however, 504 Washington Street extends through the lot with frontage at 529 Main Street, a contributing component of the district.

The remaining properties within the boundary line of the Mohawk site documented in the Phase 1A report are not eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places (Lord 2001).

Based on the possibility of archaeological resources to be found below the surface at the Mohawk site, OPRHP has determined that a Phase 1B archaeological investigation be conducted before any construction activities begin (Lord 2001).

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site consists entirely of asphalt parking lots. The only structures on the site, which are small attendants' booths, are associated with the parking lot. There is minimal landscaping and a metal fence along the perimeter of the HSBC Arena parking lot. The HSBC Atrium fronts Washington Street and is adjacent to the west boundary of the Waterfront site. Perry Street and Scott Street bound the lot to the south and north, while the east limits of the site end at a point between Baltimore Street and Columbia Street.

No National Register-listed or -eligible buildings are located within the immediate viewshed of the Waterfront site. Therefore, there are no potential historic impacts associated with the construction of the convention center at this site.

Based on the possibility of archaeological resources to be found below the surface at the Waterfront site, OPRHP has determined that a Phase 1B archaeological investigation be conducted before any construction activities begin (Lord 2001).

Expansion of Existing Buffalo Convention Center Site

OPRHP has determined that one of the seven commercial buildings identified on the proposed existing convention center site is potentially eligible for the National Register. The building at 267 Pearl Street has been determined to be State and National Register-eligible. The remaining properties within the boundary line of the Mohawk site documented in the Phase 1A report are not eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places (Lord 2001).

The NRHP-listed YMCA building is adjacent to the northern end of the existing convention center and the southern periphery of the convention center is adjacent to Bley and Lyman's twelve-story, National Register-eligible Walbridge Building (ca. 1924) at 45 Court Street. The National Register-eligible L.L. Berger Building is in proximity to the northern limits of this site.

4.9 Natural Resources

4.9.1 Soils and Geology

Soils within of each of the three proposed convention center sites are classified as Urban Land (Ud) (Owens et al. 1986:General Soil Map, sheet 41). Soils classified as this type have not been mapped in detail because most locations are highly developed for commercial, industrial, or residential uses and much of the ground surface is covered by impervious features such as buildings, roads and streets, and paved parking lots. Usually disturbed from construction activities, soils in this category are typically nearly level, disturbed, and range from well-drained to poorly drained (Owens et al. 1986: General Soil Map, Sheet 41). Evidence from previous archaeological investigations in the City of Buffalo (Keller et al. 1981; Tronolone 1985; Tronolone and Cinquino 1986; Hayward et al. 2001) suggests that up to approximately 6 feet (2 m) of fill covers the natural ground surfaces along Main Street and between 1 and 9 feet (0.3 and 3 m) of fill cover the surface

Urban land, with 0 to 3% slopes, (Ud) is a nearly level miscellaneous area in which 80% or more of the soil is covered by asphalt, concrete, buildings, or other impervious structures including parking lots, shopping and business centers, and industrial parks (Owens et al. 1986: 133).

Bedrock beneath the proposed convention center sites consists of Onondaga limestone (Owens et al. 1986:3-4). It lies deeply buried beneath glacial deposits and no rock outcroppings are visible on the ground surface. This formation is notable for the chert nodules it includes as they were the primary prehistoric lithic resource used in western New York. Relatively flat, the bedrock underlying Erie County tilts to the southwest at approximately 50 feet (15 m) per mile (Owens et al. 1986: 2-4).

The proposed construction and operation of a convention center, hotel, and parking garage at any of the identified sites will not change the USDA soil classification of the site, therefore no impacts on soils are anticipated. No removal of bedrock is anticipated due to the depth of bedrock in the vicinity of the site. Construction of the proposed project will not alter the surficial geology with the exception of the removal of fill materials and underlying soils.

4.9.2 Topography

All three project sites are situated within the Erie lake plain physiographic province, one of the two physiographic provinces of

Erie County (the Allegheny Plateau is the other). The lake plain province is located along Lake Erie and the topography typifies an abandoned lake bed. With exception of narrow ravines carved by the area's streams, there is little significant relief. Elevations within this physiographic province range from 570 to 900 feet (153 to 275 m) above mean sea level (AMSL). However, along its southern and eastern boundaries, the area has characteristics typical of glacial lake beaches where the topography quickly transitions to the Allegheny Plateau (Owens et al. 1986:2). Elevations within the project area range from approximately 615 feet (188 m) AMSL along Main Street in the vicinity of the Mohawk site to approximately 580 feet (177 m) AMSL at Scott Street. Slope increases slowly to the north and east away from Buffalo harbor

Each of the proposed sites has been disturbed by previous development activities and is not anticipated to result in significant impacts on topography.

4.9.3 Vegetation

All three proposed alternatives for the new convention center are located on urban land with no natural vegetation remaining. Therefore, little, if any, native vegetation exists at or adjacent to the proposed sites. Strips of grassy areas and street trees exist between curbs and sidewalks in a few locations. Some trees have been planted along Main Street since the construction of the LRRT system.

The proposed project will have no effect on terrestrial ecological resources because each of the proposed sites is located in an urban area dominated by commercial and retail buildings and paved surfaces. The only vegetation in the vicinity of the sites consists of a few ornamental plantings, scattered grasses, trees, and other annual and perennial herbaceous plants found in abandoned lots, along roads, and around parking lots.

4.9.4 Wildlife

The site areas are generally considered a low-quality wildlife habitat. Characteristic birds include the robin (*Turdus migratorius*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), pigeon (*Columbia livia*) and house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the New York State Natural Heritage program were contacted with regard to the location of threatened, endangered, or special concern species or unique communities within or adjacent to the project areas. According the USFWS, except for occasional transient in-

dividuals, no federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species are known to exist in the project impact area. The only known state-listed species in the area, which may inhabit the Statler Building or City Hall, is the peregrine falcon, which was last seen in 1998 but has not been reported this year (NYSDEC 2001). No biological assessment or further Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act is required (USFWS 2001).

Because each of the project sites is within a previously developed area, those species that do occasionally frequent the area are likely adapted to urban environments. Abandoned buildings and rubble piles may provide nesting habitat for birds and roosting sites for bats such as the big brown bat (*Eptesicu fuscus*), eastern pipistrel (*Pipistrellus subflavus*), and little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifigus*). Therefore, construction of a convention center at any of the proposed sites will not have significant impacts on wildlife.

4.10 Water Quality

This section discusses impacts on water quality resulting from construction of a new convention center.

4.10.1 Surface Water

Surface water in the general project area (i.e., drainage basin) consists of the Buffalo River and Lake Erie. NYSDEC has established water use classifications and water quality standards based on consideration for public health, water supplies, recreation; propagation and protection of fish and wildlife; and economic and social development. The Buffalo River and Lake Erie are both classified as Class C water bodies, which are suitable for fish propagation and survival. The quality of Class C water bodies is also suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation, although other factors may limit use for these purposes.

Impacts on Surface Water

The potential surface water impacts associated with the development of the new convention center were evaluated for each site alternative.

Mohawk Site

Existing land uses at the Mohawk site consist of a mix of commercial, public service, and industrial structures. The construction of a new convention center at the Mohawk site would not permanently impact Lake Erie or the Buffalo River.

Impacts resulting from stormwater runoff during construction will be minimized by securing a Stormwater Permit and using required stormwater-control measures. It is not expected that any additional stormwater flow would be generated, due to existing impervious surfaces covering the site. Therefore, the proposed project, regardless of the site selected, would not be expected to result in potential significant adverse impacts on water quality.

4.11 Site Environmental Concerns

This section presents the general historical and existing environmental conditions of the parcels that constitute the three proposed alternative sites. Information is presented according to each alternative site and includes data obtained from agency file reviews (local and state); the city tax assessor office (property ownership and business type); and the Phase IA Cultural Resource Assessment prepared in support of this DEIS. In addition, an independent database search firm provided historical information obtained from city directories (Polk and Haines) and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Data collection was focussed on a 0.5-mile radius centered on each alternative location, as suggested by ASTM 1527, which provides guidelines for performing site assessments. This additional information was collected for the Mohawk and Waterfront site alternatives only.

General Environmental Conditions

The history of the City of Buffalo as a national rail hub and crossroad of multi-modal transportation provided opportunities for industry and trade and gave the city a competitive edge in the production and transport of goods. Heavy industry dominated the landscape along Lake Erie (primarily) and due to the development of the National Highway System in the 1950s and 60s, Buffalo became an important crossroads for the trucking industry.

During the 1970s, the heavy industry that dominated the shorelines of Lake Erie, the Erie Canal, and the Buffalo River began to decline. By the 1980s most of what remained of this industry was empty factory buildings and environmental conditions that caused concern for public health.

Within the City's Central Business District (CBD), however, the streetscape was that of a typical downtown, with office buildings, retail stores, restaurants, theaters, and hotels. Industry and manufacturing consisted of smaller operations (e.g., machinists, printers, jewelers, shoe repair, dry cleaners, gasoline service/automobile repair stations, newspaper production) that may have generated envi-

ronmental concerns associated with business operations (e.g., petroleum products, solvents, metals). The city's economy became more business- and finance-oriented. Retail and restaurant business began to decline along with light manufacturing and industry.

Although manufacturing and light industry do continue to operate within the city, it is sporadic and these operations are typically monitored and permitted for industrial and stormwater discharges by the Buffalo Sewer Authority (BSA) and/or the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). It is therefore less likely that environmental concerns exist due to business operations today compared to historic industry operations, when pollution controls standards were not yet developed or were not as stringent.

In areas within the city where industry once existed and has since ceased operations, the typical parcel was razed to make way for new uses that supported the banking and finance industry. Parking lots and garages, new office complexes, specialty retail shops, and delicatessens replaced some of the former light manufacturing and industry locations. Potential environmental concerns associated with these past land uses may have been left in place on the parcel without proper disposal or cleanup. Although this could be a potential source of pollution, natural processes that occur over time (e.g., precipitation, erosion, general weathering of surfaces, natural breakdown of compounds, evaporation) would aid in the elimination of residual waste from operations occurring in the past. Therefore, the likelihood of encountering environmental concerns due to past land use as light industrial or manufacturing is relatively minor.

The paragraphs below include historical information (for properties that have known past land uses of potential environmental concern, but whose current use is considered of no potential environmental concern) and identification of existing businesses that are of potential concern. Additional information presented includes occurrence of underground storage tanks; spills; properties that treat, store, dispose, or generate hazardous waste, as defined by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA); and handlers of hazardous waste that required corrective action as defined under RCRA, for locations that are in proximity to the boundaries of the Mohawk site.

Mohawk Site

The Mohawk Site consists of 55 parcels of land bounded by Main Street, East Huron, Oak, Broadway, and Mohawk.

Of the parcels within the boundaries of this alternative site, the following existing businesses are of potential environmental concern:

- 301 Ellicott Street, Emulso Corporation – manufacturer of cleaning products;
- 468 Washington Street, Holling Press Building – current occupant is the Sunline Ring Manufacturer (precious metal manufacturer);
- 198 Oak Street, Russo's Auto Service – automobile repair; and
- 290 Ellicott Street, Barrister Global Services Network, Inc. – equipment maintenance (listed as a small-quantity generator in 1990 with no violations).

The following existing businesses are located in proximity to the boundaries of this alternative site and are of potential environmental concern:

- 217 Oak Street, Stetron International Inc. – manufacturer of electronic components;
- 468 Washington Street, The Jewish Review – newspaper;
- 17 Elm, Bates Jackson Engraving – commercial printing;
- 17 Elm, Choco-Logo – chocolate manufacturer; and
- 221 Elm Street, Hoffman Collision – automobile repairs.

The environmental concerns that may be associated with these businesses include use of petroleum products, ink, solvents, and industrial cleaners. These items consist of a class of compounds referred to as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and inorganic compounds (heavy metals). Typical VOCs include those found in gasoline (benzene, toluene, xylene); are used for dry cleaning clothes (triethylene); are used to maintain equipment in the manufacturing business (oil, grease, solvents); and are used for the generation of cleaning compounds (ammonia, chloride). The relevant inorganic compounds consist of lead, copper, and mercury and are typically associated with businesses where operations involve machinery and/or automobile repair.

The existing businesses within the Mohawk Site boundaries may pose an environmental concern with respect to the materials used in the processes. Information obtained from the Buffalo Sewer Authority, however, indicates that neither Emulso Corporation or Sunline Ring Manufacturer require an Industrial User Permit for pretreatment of wastewater from their facilities, and never have required such a permit (Kruszka 8/14/01). Environmental concerns may exist at these properties, however, in relation to any storage and/or use of materials during the manufacturing processes. This determination will be made during detailed site visits if this alternative location is selected.

The businesses located in proximity to the Mohawk Site pose no direct environmental concern. If these parcels are considered for ancillary uses of the proposed convention center, e.g., parking, these properties should be further reviewed to determine the potential for environmental concern.

State and Federal Database Review. A review of state and federal databases reveals that an oil spill occurred at Russo's Auto Service located at 198 Oak Street in 1987. This spill was remediated, however the location was listed as a RCRA treatment, storage, and disposal facility.

For determining the locations of USTs and leaking USTs at and in proximity to the Mohawk Site, the property located at 465 Washington Street was selected and a search radius was established. The data review determined that properties located within a 0.25-mile radius contain USTs and properties within 0.5 mile contain tanks that, in the past, had leaks due to tank test failures, tank failures, or tank overfills. None of the locations listed as containing USTs or that experienced leaks are within the boundaries of the Mohawk Site. Further review of the data determined that one of the following took place since the leak was discovered: the current land use at these locations has changed to a use not requiring USTs; the properties have undergone clean-up activities; the tanks have been removed and replaced; or, the tanks have been removed. It is unlikely that if further spills are discovered in this area they would adversely impact the proposed action of development of the property. Mitigation measures, including staging of suspect soils for subsequent analysis and proper disposal, will be implemented if visually stained soils are encountered during excavation of subsurface soils for building foundation and infrastructure placement.

City Directories/Parcel History. City directories (Polk and Haines) were reviewed for the parcels having potential environ-

mental concerns in efforts to determine historical use(s) of these properties. The Emulso Corporation has been at its location since 1961 (this is the earliest directory that lists Emulso). 217 Oak Street was a gas service station from approximately 1961 through 1975, at which point it is listed as a service and parking area. From 1975 to 2000, this address has no entry listed. The other properties located at and in proximity to the Mohawk Site were not reviewed for historical uses because they are not of potential concern and/or the properties are not immediately adjacent to the boundaries of the Mohawk Site.

Waterfront Site

The Waterfront site is located in the southern portion of downtown Buffalo between Scott Street and Perry Street and consists of two parcels of land currently used for surface parking. This area is designated exclusively commercial and, therefore, no industrial or manufacturing uses currently exist. However, adjacent to this site, south of Perry Street, various manufacturing and industrial facilities are present. It is unlikely that the current businesses have had environmental impacts on the proposed Waterfront Site.

Historical data searches were performed to determine the past land uses and probability of encountering areas of environmental concern. City directories (Polk and Haines) and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were reviewed.

City Directories/Parcel History. City directories (Haines and Polk) were reviewed for the area including 95 Washington Street, adjoining properties, and properties located in proximity to the alternative location along Washington Street. 95 Washington Street was chosen as the center property to establish a 0.5-mile radius for the parcels that encompass the project area.

Information was available for this area for 1961 through 2000 and directories were reviewed in 5-year intervals from the period where the address was first noted to the last available year. The center property (95 Washington) was listed as “Cold Spring Granite” in 1990, “Buffalo Sabres” in 1995, and was not listed in the Haines directory in the year 2000. Nearby properties that were listed with business names included the following:

- Dryden Machine Company, Inc., in 1971 (27 Washington Street);

- GE St. John Machine and Hoffer House in 1976 (27 Washington Street; 65 Washington Street);

- GE Wilson and Son Company/Chimera Radiator Manufacturing Company and Hoffer House in 1981 (27 Washington Street; 65 Washington Street);

- Mr. Radiator Inc./Chimera Radiator Manufacturing Company in 1986 (27 Washington Street);

- Chimera Radiator and Hoffer House in 1990 (27 Washington Street; 65 Washington Street); and

- No listings in 1995 and 2000.

Prior use of the surrounding properties consisted of a mixture of light industrial and commercial (Hoffer House was a restaurant). Of these uses, the properties that were once light industrial (i.e., machine shop and radiator manufacturer) are considered of environmental concern due to the presumed use and/or storage of solvents; antifreeze; oil and grease; gasoline; and other industrial compounds typically used in a machine shop and for the manufacture of radiators (it is presumed automobile radiators were manufactured, not residential heating radiators). However, if past disposal practices involved mismanagement of the waste and products used, the likelihood of these waste materials/products affecting the area proposed as the Waterfront Site is low. This is based primarily on the distance of these parcels to the Waterfront Site (further south of designated parcels between Scott and Perry streets); that these uses date back to the late 1970's and 80's; and that operations ceased in 1990 or sometime between 1990 and 1995.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Sanborn maps for the proposed Waterfront Site were available for review for the following years: 1889, 1899, 1925, 1951, 1981, and 1986. A review of the maps indicates that the area was fully developed during the period from 1889 through 1981, when the only remaining buildings were associated with cold storage and the Lehigh Valley Railroad (spurs and motor freight station). The 1986 map indicates the property was void of most development (only cold storage remained) and was used primarily as a parking lot in the western portion of the property.

Past uses of the area consisted of the following:

- Sheepskin tannery, lumber yard, fish company; Clark and Skinner canal, soap factory, residences, a public school, and an iron works shop in 1889;

- Wholesale produce, leather tannery, cold storage, and Lehigh Valley terminal freight yard in 1925;

- Cartage and warehousing, cold storage, and the railroad terminal freight yard in 1951; and

- Cold storage, railroad spurs, and parking in 1981 and 1986.

The tannery (sheep and leather), railroad terminal freight yard, and to a lesser degree, soap factory and iron works shop, are uses that pose environmental concerns, based on the materials typically used in the operations of each business (i.e., solvents, dyes, and animal waste [tannery]; creosote, tars, and oil and grease [rail yard]; animal waste and paraffins [soap factory]; and paint residues and metal shavings [iron works]). While these businesses and operational materials/waste typically are cause for environmental concern, because the operations date back as far as the late 1880's through 1951, any presence of waste materials from the business operations has most likely degraded in the existing soil to levels of no concern and/or levels that parallel existing background levels of adjacent soils. The railroad spurs, however, remained at the area through 1986. It is probable that, if contaminated soils are present in this area, they are at levels that do not warrant further action. If contaminated soils are present at levels that require proper cleanup (based on real-time instrument measurements) staging of excavated soils that appear to be tainted (by appearance or odor) may be necessary.

If this alternative is chosen, excavation of the ground for placement of infrastructure and building foundations should be approached with caution and awareness of the past history of the various uses of the project site and nearby parcels as light industrial, manufacturing, storage, and railroad operations.

Existing Convention Center Site

The existing convention center location and the area for expansion/renovation consist of eight parcels of land and include a mix of commercial and recreation/entertainment uses. There are no industrial or manufacturing uses occupying these parcels. This area is mainly in the center of the CBD, where past land uses consisted of offices, retail businesses, and restaurants. There was no heavy industrial use or any large-scale manufacturing. The convention center has occupied this location since 1978. It is unlikely that any environmental concerns are present in this area.

Mitigation Measures

Measures to manage any contaminated materials encountered during the construction of the Convention Center should be included in the contractor specifications for construction at the selected alternative. Typical mitigation measures employed in areas of environmental concern include the following:

- Excavation and temporary staging of soils and excavated materials on an appropriately lined surface for purposes of screening with real-time reading instrumentation;
- Notification of NYSDEC and appropriate City personnel;
- Collection of soil and material samples (if warranted) to characterize soil for determining proper disposal procedures;
- If water is encountered and a sheen or noxious odors are present, contact NYSDEC and appropriate City personnel. Place absorbent booms in the excavated pit to prevent further migration below and beyond the area of excavation; and
- If USTs or drummed material is encountered, contact NYSDEC and appropriate City personnel to determine the next step in removal and containment.

4.12 Urban Design and Visual Resources

4.12.1 Setting

As part of the EIS process for a new convention center in Buffalo, New York, the project team reviewed three sites for possible expansion or new construction. These sites are located approximately at Mohawk and Washington Streets (named *the Mohawk site*), at Perry and Michigan Streets (named *the Waterfront site*), and at the existing facility eastward to Main Street (named *the Existing convention center site;* this site would involve an expansion of the existing facility). These three sites were analyzed with respect to their urban design characteristics and historic preservation concerns. Reuse potential of the existing convention center also was studied. A complete review of this analysis is contained in Appendix E.

Mohawk Site

Setting. The Mohawk site is located east of the existing convention center. The site contains some buildings of merit, while the surrounding district borders on the fringe of the urban core, where

the urban fabric is beginning to fray. Specifically, the site is located:

- One block east of Main Street, bounded by Huron Street to the north, Oak Street to the east, Broadway to the south, and Washington Street to the west;
- One block east of the Hyatt Hotel; two blocks south of the Journey's End Hotel; several blocks from the Hampton Inn and Mansion on Delaware; and within 1 mile of the Adam's Mark, Holiday Inn, and Day's Inn Hotels;
- One block from the Theater District to the north;
- Adjacent to the National Landmark Buffalo Savings Bank and Niagara Mohawk Buildings;
- Adjacent to the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library and Lafayette Square, providing unique urban parks, regularly programmed with entertainment and activities;
- Within one block of primary financial centers occupied by Key, Fleet, and M&T Banks;
- One block east of the LRRT corridor, serving points north and south on Main Street, including two "Park & Ride" lots, the Medical Corridor, and the University at Buffalo South Campus;
- One block east of the LRRT Pedestrian Mall, one of the largest traffic-free pedestrian malls in the nation;
- One block north of Main Place Mall, providing concentrated shopping opportunities, in addition to a small retail district immediately to the east on Main Street;
- Two blocks from the Chippewa Street entertainment district and Theater District providing vast and varied entertainment and dining opportunities for conventioneers; and
- Adjacent to a struggling small retail core, with grossly underutilized building stock. This retail core, however, is a prime intact example of mid-19th Century commercial structures with a cohesive scale, rhythm, and streetscape, exclusive of their condition.

The proposed Mohawk site proper is an urban landscape pock-marked by prior demolition and parking lots. The buildings are in vastly varying states of vacancy and repair. The district was at one time a center of manufacturing and sales, with several businesses devoted to the electrical market. Approximately 30 buildings, including six one-story, seven two-story, six three-story, one four-story, two five-story, two six-story, and one 10-story structures, and a contemporary concrete parking ramp, occupy the site. If the site boundary extends across Washington to Main Street, an additional 17 structures will be affected.

Urban Design Considerations

Since 1960, approximately 27 buildings within the limits of the Mohawk site have been demolished (Panamerican 2001). The existing structures do not present a dense or unbroken silhouette or massing to the site. The remaining structures on the northwest portion of the site do not relate in density or scale to historical urban patterns. The buildings that remain represent various phases in downtown development, but do not create a complete homogeneous district.

The site is bisected by East Mohawk Street and Hersee Alley running east and west, and Ellicott Street and Blossom Alley running north and south. The site is served by the Elm/Oak Corridor, easily connecting Route 33 and I-290 to the parcel. Properties to the west, fronting Washington Street, are mainly vacant, and the properties fronting Main and Genesee are 50% vacant. Those occupied are first-floor only, except for the Urban League (5-7 Genesee Street), a three-story social service building. Properties to the east take on a more suburban character. These properties work to further diminish any cohesive urban district. Selection of this site will require finding a reuse solution for the existing facility.

Waterfront Site

Setting. The waterfront site is located at the foot of Main Street near activity, cultural, and employment centers. Specifically, the site is located:

- Adjacent to HSBC Arena and its attached parking structure;
- Adjacent to the Cobblestone local historic district, with ties to early Buffalo waterfront business history and vernacular construction;

- One block from the proposed Adelphia office development, Buffalo River, and Inner Harbor construction. This district includes the U.S.S. Little Rock, U.S.S. The Sullivans, and the U.S.S. Croaker;

- Within one block of primary financial centers occupied by HSBC and M&T banks;

- One block east of the LRRT corridor, serving points north and south on Main Street, including two "Park & Ride" lots, the Medical Corridor, and the University at Buffalo South Campus;

- Adjacent to the *Buffalo News* printing and publishing headquarters as well as the Donovan State Office Building;

- Served by the NYS Thruway-Niagara Section with on and off ramps within two blocks from site, as well as Michigan Street providing access to Route 33; and

- Within 0.25 mile of the Buffalo Automotive museum, Flickinger Athletic Center, Dunn Tire Park, and the ECC City Campus.

The Waterfront site is surface parking for the HSBC Atrium Building and *Buffalo News* staff and delivery vehicles, and provides limited off-hours arena parking. There are no buildings on site. Improvements are limited to site lighting, minimal landscaping, and contemporary fencing.

Urban Design Considerations

While the site is paved, with no above-grade record of previous land use, adjacent blocks have been designated as historic to protect early street configurations and building types. The Cobblestone District block contains low-rise industrial buildings that are mainly vacant or used for storage. One bar, a blacksmith, and the offices of the Preservation Coalition of Erie County remain in this district. HSBC Arena and its adjacent parking structure and the HSBC Atrium are contemporary constructions completed within the last five years. The *Buffalo News* headquarters contains a late 20th Century concrete office building with a mid-century concrete block and steel printing facility behind it. Properties east of the site, across Columbia and Michigan, are mainly brick loading docks and industrial buildings of three stories or fewer, and are mainly vacant or used for limited storage purposes. Selection of this site will require finding a reuse solution for the existing facility.

Existing Convention Center Expansion/Renovation

Setting. The existing convention center facility is strategically located in downtown Buffalo, near several activity and architectural centers. Specifically, the site is located:

- Adjacent to and including the existing site, with Franklin Street to the west, the former Genesee Street to the north, Main Street to the east, and the rear property line of buildings facing Court Street to the south;
- Centrally between the Joseph Ellicott Historic District to the south and the Theater District Historic District to the northeast;
- Immediately south of the National Landmark YMCA Building;
- Immediately west of the Hyatt Hotel, within three blocks of the Hampton Inn and Journey's End Hotels and within approximately 1 mile of the Adam's Mark, Mansion on Delaware, Holiday Inn, and Best Western Hotels;
- Within an active office area and immediately north of a government district that includes City, County, State and federal office and court buildings;
- Within one block of main financial centers occupied by Key, Fleet, and M&T Banks;
- One block west of the LRRT corridor, serving points north and south on Main Street, including two "Park & Ride" lots, the Medical Corridor, and the University at Buffalo South Campus;
- One block west of the LRRT Pedestrian Mall, one of the largest traffic-free pedestrian malls in the nation;
- One block north of Main Place Mall, providing concentrated shopping opportunities, in addition to a small retail district immediately to the east on Main Street; and
- Two blocks from the Chippewa Street entertainment district and Theater District providing vast and varied entertainment opportunities for a variety of conventioneers.

The existing convention center site is serving the convention market with an exhibit floor, ballroom, meeting rooms, and service

functions. The north edge of the property is located on the former Genesee Street, now closed to vehicular traffic but available as a narrowed pedestrian cut-through. An opportunity exists to extend the existing facility over to Main Street across Pearl Street. Structures surrounding the site are of various sizes and uses, proving a broad-use, variegated urban fabric characteristic. The urban character of the site surroundings is dense, with interspersed free-standing and "in-building" parking structures. There is little surface parking or underdeveloped land in this district.

Urban Design Considerations

The existing convention center facility is located in the heart of downtown Buffalo on decidedly urban streets. Access from the highway or expressway is through the city streets. The construction of the existing facility forced the demolition of all previous structures on the site. Construction of the facility erased the continuity of the existing radial street plan in that portion of the city. Court Street, running east and west along the south boundary of the site, remains a key component of the radial plan and vista downtown. The bulk of the property surrounding the existing convention center facility is substantially occupied and in good condition. Reuse of this site would eliminate the need to find a new use for the existing facility.

Architectural, Cultural, and Community Values

Evaluation of a site in terms of historic preservation must consider architectural, cultural, and community issues. Architectural integrity must be considered. This involves the quality and intactness of the original design of the building. Each site was reviewed by the project team in the following categories: Setting Proximities and Site Characteristics, Scale and Design, Relationship to Existing Architecture, Streetscape, Views and Vistas, Activity Centers, Pedestrian and Vehicular Approach Corridors (links, edges, and barriers), and Opportunities. A complete review is found in Appendix E.

4.12.2 Project Impacts

Criteria for Impact Assessment. In conjunction with an analysis of setting, a weighting factor was applied to the architectural, cultural, and community values delineated in the Impact Matrices found in Appendix E. These matrices give particular emphasis to those values traditionally identified with urban development, particularly on the three sites identified for potential use of the convention center structure, and are used as a toll to quantify the impacts of development of a particular site, and impact on

surrounding structures. Properties and lots on each site were analyzed with respect to design, setting, location, materials, scale, association with lives or events, high artistic value, work of a master, archaeological value, representative nature, and development potential. A definition of each of these criteria and their applicability to each development area are included in Appendix E, and site-specific impacts are summarized below.

Mohawk Site

The construction of a new two- or three-story, five-block, large building at the Mohawk Site would have a significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood, adjacent historic structures, and the streetscape. The immediate zone around the site contains primarily small-scale, early urban structures that could conflict with the overall scale of the new convention center. Demolition of historic resources would be required. A 900-foot tunnel would be created. Service areas must be designed to properly address the division existing at the Elm-Oak Corridor.

Waterfront Site

The impacts on the Waterfront Site of a new convention center would be less severe. Buildings surrounding any new structure are in keeping with the scale of a large civic convention facility. The available site allows for a lower level, primarily one-story plan. The site is segregated from the remainder of downtown and the Old First Ward. Service bays could be oriented to not impact the Cobblestone Historic District. Entrances facing this district could strengthen this streetscape and encourage reuse of this fragile historic area.

Expansion/Renovation of the Existing Convention Center

Expansion/renovation could correct the urban design flaws of the existing facility, but is the most problematic alternative. The site is adjacent to the Joseph Ellicott Historic District and several individual local and national landmarks. Spanning Pearl Street with new construction will result in Main Street frontage of a scale comparable to adjacent structures, but will also create a 400-foot tunnel over Pearl Street. There is no resolvable way to provide truck ramp access to the split level exhibit floors created. Location of a back of the building on Franklin or Court streets would be inappropriate.

A full discussion of impacts of construction at the three alternatives sites is provided in Appendix E.

4.13 Traffic and Parking

The analysis of traffic and parking conditions is required for completion of the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process. This analysis evaluates the existing and future traffic and parking conditions at each of the three proposed Buffalo Convention Center sites (Mohawk, Waterfront, and Existing), identifies the impacts associated at each proposed site, and offers recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts identified by these studies. The result of the complete traffic and parking study, conducted by URS Greiner Corporation, is provided in full in Appendix D.

Vehicular traffic data collection and modeling were performed with the assistance of the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC). Synchro V5.0, software utilizing the methods of the *Highway Capacity Manual*, was used to analyze the existing and future traffic conditions. The traffic data used for the analysis were collected within the previous three years. The results of the analysis can be found in Section 5.0 of Appendix D. The traffic accident data cover the period of June 1, 1998, to June 1, 2001, and were provided by the Buffalo Police Department. Information regarding parking facilities was supplied by Buffalo Place and a recent report prepared by Desman Associates (March 2000).

The purpose of this study is to provide a planning-level evaluation of the impacts associated with development at each proposed site. This study does not replace the detailed analysis required as part of the final design process.

4.13.1 Existing Intersection Data

Per the scoping session and in conjunction with the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (ECDEP), it was determined that 10 intersections were to be selected for traffic analysis. After initial data collection, intersections were selected based on the following criteria:

- Their proximity to each site;
- Their connection to arterial roads that bring visitors to the Central Business District (CBD);
- The number of accidents that occurred at the intersection;
- The type of intersection (determined by the complexity of traffic movements); and

- The existing and anticipated traffic volume.

Traffic volume counts were recorded at each intersection, on a day that represented typical weekday conditions, during the morning (7 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.) and afternoon (2 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.) peak traffic hours. The existing intersection traffic volume count figures are in Appendix D. As shown in Appendix D, Table 4-1, all intersections are operating at a Level of Service of C or better. Below are the intersections selected for each proposed alternative site.

Proposed Mohawk Site

Four intersections were selected for study pertaining to the Mohawk site: 1) North Oak Street and Genesee Street; 2) Elm Street and Genesee Street; 3) Ellicott Street and East Huron Street; and 4) Washington Street and East Chippewa Street.

Proposed Waterfront Site

Three intersections were selected for study pertaining to the Waterfront site: 1) Washington Street and Perry Street; 2) Washington Street and Scott Street; and 3) Michigan Avenue and South Park Avenue.

Expansion of Existing Facility

Three intersections were selected for study pertaining to the Existing site: 1) Pearl Street and Court Street; 2) Franklin Street and Court Street; and 3) Elmwood Avenue and West Huron Street.

4.13.2 Parking Supply

Existing available parking around each site was identified. The identified parking facilities were within a desirable walking range from each site (one-quarter of a mile). The data presented below were collected on a weekday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., the hours that represent peak business activity. Additional illustrations and tables regarding the available parking are in Appendix D. Following is a summary of the parking analysis for each site.

Proposed Mohawk Site

As indicated in Appendix D, Figure 1-10, 40 parking facilities were identified within a quarter-mile of the proposed Mohawk site. Appendix D, Table 1-7, identifies 6,608 total spaces within the study corridor, of which 830 are not occupied during the hours that represent peak business activity (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Additional capacity is available during weekends and evenings.

Proposed Waterfront Site

As indicated in Appendix D, Figure 2-8, 18 parking facilities were identified within a quarter-mile of the proposed Waterfront site. Appendix D, Table 2-6, identifies 5,390 total spaces within the study corridor, of which 1,160 are not occupied during peak business hours. Additional capacity may be available during weekends and evenings, depending on events conducted at HSBC Arena.

Expansion of Existing Facility

As indicated in Appendix D, Figure 3-8, 30 parking facilities were identified within a quarter-mile of the expansion of the existing facility. Appendix D, Table 3-6, also indicates 7,167 total spaces within the study corridor, of which 809 are not occupied during the hours of peak business activity. Additional capacity is available during weekends and evenings.

4.13.3 Accident Analysis

The accident history in the vicinity of the proposed project sites was reviewed and tabulated. The compiled data were used to create collision diagrams to identify accident patterns and to evaluate the accident rates associated with each intersection. The average accident rates were established using the number of accidents that occurred there within the study period, and the average daily traffic (ADT) of each intersection (see Appendix D, Table 4-4). The accident rates then were compared to the Average Intersection Accident Rate for New York State Highways (State Average). The State Averages are 0.75 accident (ACC) per million entering vehicles (MEV) for a four-legged signalized intersection, and 0.18 accident per MEV for a three-legged unsignalized intersection (see Appendix D, Section 5-11). All studied intersections are four-legged signalized intersections, except for the intersection of Washington Street at Perry Street, which is a three-legged unsignalized intersection. These accident rates are commonly used in New York State as a method to identify potential safety deficiencies. The accident rates, summary of accident history, and collision diagrams are presented for each site in Appendix D. In the course of a three-year accident study period, 94 accidents were reported, with the following breakdown:

Proposed Mohawk Site

The analysis for the intersections of Elm Street at Genesee Street and Ellicott Street at East Huron Street revealed accident rates higher than the State Average (0.75 ACC/MEV), with rates of 0.84 and 1.03 ACC/MEV, respectively. The most common type of accident at both intersections was right-angle. The intersections of Washington Street at East Chippewa Street and North Oak Street at

Genesee Street had accident rates below the State Average. Additional information regarding accident data for these intersections is in Appendix D, Tables 1-3 and 1-4.

Proposed Waterfront Site

The analysis for the intersections of Washington Street at Perry Street (the only three-legged unsignalized intersection in this study) and Washington Street at Scott Street revealed accident rates higher than the State Average (0.18 and 0.75 ACC/MEV), with rates of 0.48 and 1.07 ACC/MEV, respectively. The only two types of accidents at Washington Street and Perry Street were backing and hitting parked vehicles. The most common type of accident at Washington Street and Scott Street was right-angle. The intersection of Michigan Avenue at South Park Avenue had an accident rate below the State Average. Additional information regarding accident data for these intersections is in Appendix D, Tables 2-2 and 2-3.

Expansion of Existing Facility

The analysis for the intersections of Franklin Street at Court Street and Pearl Street at Court Street revealed accident rates higher than the State Average (0.75 ACC/MEV), with rates of 1.39 and 1.47 ACC/MEV, respectively. The most common type of accident at Franklin Street at Court Street was right-angle. For Pearl Street at Court Street, the most common types were right-angle and pedestrian-related. The intersection of Elmwood Avenue at West Huron Street had an accident rate below the State Average. Additional information regarding accident data for these intersections is in Appendix D, Tables 3-2 and 3-3.

4.13.4 Transportation Impacts

Development of a new or expanded convention center at any of the three alternative sites will affect the existing traffic conditions and parking infrastructure surrounding the proposed locations. The purpose of this traffic impact study is to model the vehicular traffic generated by the proposed convention center (particularly the ingress patterns to each site and their impact on the CBD) and to analyze and assess existing and proposed parking facilities, namely the adequacy of the proposed 1,250-space parking structure.

For a planning analysis of this type, several assumptions were used for the traffic modeling:

- A single peak annual event of 50,000 visitors per day (however, most of the events are much smaller);

- A peak event that would overlap the typical business day (although most of the events occur off peak on evenings and weekends);

- A traffic growth rate of 1.5% annually (nationwide standard for a growing economy); and

- The "Build" analysis for Synchro V5.0, which was modeled for the incoming traffic. This simplifying assumption is justified for the following reasons:
  - One-way street patterns in the City of Buffalo CBD (therefore, the intersections impacted by incoming traffic are different from those impacted by outgoing traffic),
  - Existing parking infrastructure is dispersed,
  - The impact of additional vehicular traffic at each intersection was minimal compared to the projected future base traffic volumes, and
  - The unpredictability of future city roadway circulation patterns.

The above assumptions were utilized to develop an equation that estimates the number of vehicular trips generated by the presence of a new or expanded convention center. The following analysis can be seen below:

(Equation 1)

$$\frac{50{,}000\ \text{People}}{\text{Day}} * \frac{1\ \text{Day}}{2\ \text{Cycles}} * \frac{1\ \text{Cycle}}{2\ \text{Hours}} * \frac{1\ \text{Car}}{2.5\ \text{People}} = \frac{2{,}000\ \text{Cars}}{\text{Hour}}$$

The following sections describe the potential impacts associated with the development or expansion of a convention center.

4.13.5 Projected Intersection Impact

The capacity of the aforementioned 10 intersections was evaluated. The intersection capacity is classified by a measurement termed *Level of Service (LOS)*. LOS is defined as a measure describing potential operational conditions within a traffic stream. LOS generally describes these conditions in terms of such factors as speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, and convenience. Similar to an academic report card, LOS values are listed by a letter grade such that LOS A conditions represent a high quality of operation with little or no delay and congestion. Conversely, LOS F represents conditions with extreme

delay and a high rate of congestion. Each LOS represents a range in the measures that establish service levels. Intersections with LOS D or better are in the range of desirable stable flow because they ensure a more acceptable quality of service to facility users. However, LOS E is the value that corresponds to the maximum allowable capacity at the intersection (taken from the 2000 edition of the *Highway Capacity Manual*). Because the evaluation was performed using peak-hour volumes, a LOS of E or better was desirable.

As directed by the Lead Agency, the intersections were evaluated for three design periods for the AM and PM peak hours: 1) the existing conditions; 2) the conditions at the Estimated Time of Completion (ETC); and 3) ETC + 5 yrs. For the projected background traffic volumes, a traffic growth rate of 1.5% per year was used. This is consistent with standard practice to provide a conservative traffic volume growth estimate. A "Build" scenario also was also evaluated at the time periods of ETC and ETC + 5 yrs. for the AM and PM peak-hour volumes. The projected intersection volume for a "Build" scenario, as seen above in Equation 1, revealed an additional 2,000 cars per day entering the CBD because of an event. The Trip Distribution Figure (see Appendix D, Figure 4-1) was utilized to determine the percentage of incoming traffic at any of the 10 selected intersections. The resulting intersection volume for the ETC and the ETC + 5 yrs. then was applied to determine additional individual movements.

The analysis revealed minor changes to the LOS at each evaluated intersection (see Appendix D, Table 4-1). This is due in part to the fact that the increase in traffic due to a new convention center was minimal compared to the projected future base traffic volumes. It should be noted that the existing and future intersection traffic volumes used for the analysis were based on weekday peak-hour values, the hours during which fewer than 20% of the convention center events of the 2000 season took place (the greatest amount of attendance occurred on weekends). Following is a summary of the traffic values for each site.

Proposed Mohawk Site

The intersections of Washington Street at Chippewa Street and North Oak Street at Genesee Street revealed an undesirable LOS at ETC + 5 yrs. for the AM peak hours. Therefore, several conceptual alternatives were identified and evaluated. One alternative was to optimize the phase signal timing. In this scenario, Synchro V5.0 identifies an optimized signal timing and reveals the LOS for the associated times. This resulted in an LOS B for the intersection

of Washington Street at Chippewa Street. However, additional traffic mitigation would be necessary for the North Oak Street at Genesee Street intersection. The existing southbound right lane of Oak Street would be converted to a southbound through-lane with a right turn. This could be done if parking along the west side of Oak Street were restricted during the morning peak-traffic hours. The analysis revealed an intersection LOS E for the AM peak ETC + 5 yrs. "Build" scenario, which is acceptable. A summary of the LOS for these alternatives is in Appendix D, Table 4-2.

Proposed Waterfront Site

The analysis for the intersections associated with the proposed Waterfront site revealed LOS B and better for existing and future conditions. In addition, the anticipated traffic growth for a "Build" scenario revealed little to no reduction in the LOS at the intersections. No further analysis was necessary.

In a scenario in which an event at HSBC Arena occurs simultaneously with an event at the proposed convention center, it is inferred that the intersections will operate at a failing LOS because of the high intersection volumes. In this situation, it will be necessary for traffic control officers to direct the traffic at nearby intersections. This is consistent with traffic safety management at current events at HSBC Arena.

Expansion of Existing Facility

The analysis for the intersections associated with the existing convention center revealed LOS B and better for existing and future conditions. In addition, the anticipated traffic growth for a "Build" scenario revealed little to no reduction in the LOS at the intersections.

4.13.6 Parking Demand

This section evaluates the need for additional parking at each site, namely the construction of the 1,250-space parking structure. Three methodologies were utilized to estimate the parking demand:

- Occupancy Assumption Analysis (see Appendix D, Table 4-3);
- Engineering/Architectural Parking Demand Standards (see Appendix D, Figure 4-2); and
- Base Comparison to Comparable Facilities (see Section 2.7).

According to the occupancy analysis performed in Appendix D, Table 4-3, the maximum attendance for overlapping events at the

convention center yields 8,000 people at one time. This is based on square-footage life safety density factors. Using the estimate of 2.5 people per car (found in Appendix D, Section 4.7) results in the need to provide 3,200 parking spaces for the convention center. Additional parking would be required if a headquarters-quality, 400-room hotel were included in the program.

The Engineering/Architectural standards analysis, using equations from Appendix D, Figure 4-2, revealed a need for 4,970 parking spaces. This analysis considers the amount of net usable convention center space and includes an estimate for the proposed 400-room hotel.

Several comparable facilities are analyzed in Section 2.7 of this DEIS. Such facilities included convention centers in Providence, Rhode Island; Rochester, New York; Columbus, Ohio; and Syracuse, New York.

Of the three methodologies cited above, the most conservative approach yields a requirement for approximately 5,000 parking spaces. Several conditions observed in the City of Buffalo CBD tend to reduce this conservative estimate, including:

- The existing modal split of transportation;
- The amount of existing parking available within a 0.25-mile radius;
- The fact that most of the events take place during non-peak parking hours; and
- The number of visitors staying and already parked at existing hotel parking lots.

All of these factors would help to further reduce the parking demand. The least conservative approach (comparison to the Syracuse Convention Center) yields a minimum requirement of 1,000 on-site parking spaces.

Below is the parking infrastructure impact associated with the presence of a new or expanded convention center at each of the three proposed sites. The parking requirement was estimated, taking an arithmetic average of the three analyses, and resulting in 3,056 required parking spaces.

Proposed Mohawk Site

Development of the convention center at the Mohawk site will eliminate a significant amount of parking spaces (1,120), including a City of Buffalo parking ramp with more than 600 spaces and a high daily utilization rate. Within a 0.25-mile envelope of the site, there are 6,608 available spaces (see Appendix D, Table 1-7 and Figure 1-10), among which are approximately 830 unused spaces. In order to accommodate for the loss of the parking spaces due to the construction of the facility and to provide for the attendance at the proposed convention center, it may be necessary to provide for a worst-case upper limit size of 3,346 (3,056 + 1,120 – 830) parking spaces. At the very least, it will be necessary to build a parking facility with at least 1,250 spaces.

Proposed Waterfront Site

The proposed Waterfront site is a parking lot for *Buffalo News* trucks and adjacent HSBC Arena employees. Development of this site would eliminate 855 parking spaces for adjacent offices, *Buffalo News*, and HSBC Arena users. An additional consideration for this site involves the occurrence of large events at HSBC Arena simultaneously with events at a proposed Waterfront convention center.

However, within a 0.25-mile envelope of the site, there are 5,390 available parking spaces (see Appendix D, Table 2-6 and Figure 2-8), including a 1,100-space HSBC Arena parking ramp. Among the 5,390 available parking spaces, 1,160 are unused. In order to accommodate for the loss of the parking spaces due to the construction of the facility, and to provide for the attendance at the proposed convention center, it may be necessary to build a facility with an upper limit size of 2,751 (3,056 + 855 – 1,160) parking spaces. At minimum, it will be necessary to construct a 1,250-space parking facility.

Expansion of Existing Facility

The proposed expansion of the existing convention center would eliminate a minimal amount of parking facilities, namely the 60-space parking lot within the site plan. However, within a 0.25-mile envelope of the site, there are 7,167 available parking spaces (see Appendix D, Table 2-6 and Figure 2-8), including 809 unused spaces. In order to accommodate for the loss of the parking spaces due to the construction of the facility and for the anticipated attendance at the convention center, it may be necessary to build a facility with an upper limit size of 2,226 (3,056 + 60 – 890) parking spaces. However, it will be necessary to build, at minimum, a 1,250-space parking facility.

4.13.7 Truck Access

It is critical to study truck access and truck loading/unloading for the successful operation of a convention center. Conceptual site plan figures illustrate on-site truck parking for at least 12 trucks. If a scheduled event creates a demand for more than 12 trucks, the additional trucks will have to be parked at an identified off-site staging area.

According to an Erie County truck route map, provided by the Division of Safety, City of Buffalo, all of the downtown CBD is an unrestricted zone for truck traffic. This includes south of North Street, north of South Park Avenue, west of Elmwood Avenue, and east of Michigan Avenue. In addition, the major truck routes for the CBD include Elmwood, Michigan, and South Park Avenues. Truck access to any of the three proposed sites will be adequate for demand.

5

Mitigation Measures

Construction and operation of the proposed new Buffalo convention center will result in adverse impacts that will require mitigation in order to minimize the impacts to the maximum extent practicable. Except for the "Lost Opportunity Costs" associated with precluding other future developments at the Mohawk site (i.e., housing), all potential adverse impacts will be generally minor and can be avoided or minimized through the implementation of effective mitigation measures. Mitigation measures are those measures, efforts, or actions employed to reduce or avoid significant impacts associated with the proposed development.

In addition, any adverse impacts that cannot be avoided will be offset by:

- The short- and long-term economic benefits that the project will have in terms of construction impacts and attracting more out-of-town visitors and major conventions to Buffalo;
- Increasing direct and indirect beneficial economic impacts related to construction and operation of the center (e.g., employment and spending);
- Improving Buffalo's image as a convention and meeting destination;
- The stimulation of other related and unrelated development in the Theater District; and
- The increased generation of sales tax and bed tax revenue from increased commercial sales and hotel occupancy.

Various measures will be employed routinely by Erie County during the construction and operation of the new Buffalo convention center to minimize environmental impacts. Some of these mitigation techniques are in accordance with general guidelines estab-

lished by federal, state, and local governments, whereas others are project-specific.

Land Use/Housing

If the proposed convention center is constructed on the Mohawk site, it would result in the lost opportunity to provide downtown housing or other related uses (e.g., commercial and retail) on this site. Housing units are being proposed within the Holling Press Building and at other locations adjacent to and close to the Mohawk site. Redevelopment of the Holling Press Building for housing would be precluded, and development of housing at other nearby sites could be impacted by the perception that it may not be desirable to live "across the street" from a convention center.

While mitigation for lost development opportunities, such as housing, would not be possible on the actual Mohawk site, these impacts could be mitigated by providing inducements and incentives to develop housing units at other key sites and locations downtown. For example, to offset the loss of potential housing at the Holling Press Building, Erie County may provide financial incentives for development of similar housing units on another site in downtown Buffalo specifically identified by the R/UDAT.

In order to minimize the loss of existing jobs and businesses within the City of Buffalo, Erie County and the City of Buffalo would have to provide incentives and assistance to businesses that would be displaced by the location of the convention center at the Mohawk site, to ensure that they relocate to other suitable locations within the City of Buffalo.

Cultural Resources

The NYS Office of Parks and Recreation has determined that the following structures are listed and/or eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places:

- 36 (a.k.a.: 38) Broadway, Buehl Block;
- 321 Ellicott Street, Ferguson Electric Building;
- 465 Washington Street, Sinclair Building;
- 501 Washington Street, George Washington Building/Holling Press Building); and
- 515-517, 523, 525, 529, 535, and 537 Main Street; 11 Genesee Street; Buffalo Urban League Building; and 504 Washington

Street, which are contributing buildings in the National Register Eligible 500 Block Historic District.

OPRHP has determined that these buildings are important and that, without additional evaluation and extensive mitigation, their loss would be considered significant. In order to mitigate impacts on these structures, Erie County must negotiate with OPRHP to determine appropriate documentation and recording procedures to record each of the above structures, which would be demolished to allow for construction of the convention center. In addition, all practical measures will be taken during final design to avoid the need to demolish these structures and to avoid adverse impacts to nearby structures, such as the Niagara Mohawk Building, which could be redeveloped into the headquarters hotel.

Based on the possibility of archaeological resources to be found below the surface at the Mohawk site, OPRHP has determined that a Phase 1B archaeological investigation should be conducted before any construction activities begin.

Wildlife

The only known state-listed species in the area that may inhabit the Statler Building or City Hall is the peregrine falcon, which was last seen in 1998 but has not been reported this year (NYSDEC 2001). No biological assessment or further Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act is required (USFWS 2001).

However, because of NYSDEC's concerns regarding other local construction projects of similar height in downtown Buffalo, construction contractors will be informed of the possibility of peregrine falcons to be present during construction and that they may pose a threat to construction workers. In addition, flags will be placed on the top of high cranes in order to deter peregrine falcons from perching on them and exposing their feathers to oil or grease, thus affecting their ability to fly.

Site Contamination

It is very likely that past uses of the Mohawk site have resulted in some level of contamination due to manufacturing, storage, or processing of various materials and the presence of underground storage tanks (USTs) for fuel storage or other purposes. While this DEIS identifies several parcels of concern due to past land use activities, USTs, and recorded spills, site-specific investigations have not been conducted. More detailed site investigations must be completed before the acquisition of these parcels and subsequent convention center design and construction activities.

Measures to manage any contaminated materials encountered during the construction of the convention center should be included in the contractor specifications for construction at the selected alternative. Typical mitigation measures employed in areas of environmental concern include the following:

- Excavation and temporary staging of soils and excavated materials on an appropriately lined surface for purposes of screening with real-time reading instrumentation;
- Notification of NYSDEC and appropriate County personnel;
- Collection of soil and material samples (if warranted) to characterize soil for determining proper disposal procedures;
- Contact of NYSDEC and appropriate City personnel if water is encountered and a sheen or noxious odors are present. Absorbent booms would be placed in the excavated pit to prevent further migration below and beyond the area of excavation; and
- Contact of NYSDEC and appropriate City personnel if USTs or drummed material are encountered in order to determine the next step in removal and containment.

Air Quality

Local air quality will be affected slightly by emissions from equipment used in the construction of the arena, hotel, and parking garage. Excavation, site grading, and other construction activities also will cause minor, localized fugitive dust emissions. Additional air emissions also will result from the increases in vehicular traffic generated by construction activities, and by the operation of the convention center.

These air quality impacts will be minimal, and will be mitigated to the extent practicable by adherence to standard construction guidelines and facility operations procedures. For example, particulate emissions during construction can be minimized by applying water or approved agglomerating agents. To minimize traffic congestion and the impact of construction activities on air quality, the movement of construction vehicles off site and deliveries of construction materials can be scheduled during non-peak traffic periods.

Noise

Noise from demolition and construction activities is expected to be minor and within the acceptable occupational exposure limits out-

lined by OSHA standards, and will comply with applicable local laws, ordinances, or regulations relating to noise control, including the City of Buffalo Noise Ordinance.

Given that the Mohawk site is located in an urban area adjacent to a major traffic artery and other sources of typical urban noise (generated from on-site and off-site sources), the incremental increase in noise associated with the use of the convention center will not be significant.

Urban Design

Because neither preliminary nor detailed design of the proposed convention center has been completed, the evaluation of architectural drawings, renderings, or visual simulations of what the proposed convention center would look like is not yet possible. However, there are significant urban design and visual challenges, constraints, and opportunities facing the design effort, as documented in Section 4.12 of this DEIS. Because the identification of specific mitigation measures is not possible until the design and actual footprint are known, this DEIS identifies several mitigation measures that can be followed in the design effort in order to reduce potential impacts and enhance the opportunities that the site presents. These measures include the following:

- The incorporation of elements into the design of the actual facility and the surrounding site that encourage, facilitate, and relate to pedestrian activity in and around the site. These elements can include convenient entrances, well-lighted walkways, and visual connections to key landmarks, and would be important in maintaining the well-balanced coexistence and harmony of past and present architecture;

- The integration of pedestrian-scale building design elements such as facade treatments;

- The use of colors, textures, and building forms to create a building design that will contribute to its own individuality and value to the urban fabric of Buffalo, and that will complement the nearby Theater District and other structures;

- The development of visual and pedestrian linkages between the convention center and the residential areas and communities east of the site, to Main Street/LRRT and the Theater District to the west, to HSBC Arena and Dunn Tire Park to the south, and to the Elm-Oak/Route 33 corridor as a major entrance to downtown Buffalo. In this manner, the proposed structures can

play an important role in visually connecting to many diverse residential, commercial, recreational, and cultural activity centers within downtown Buffalo;

- Design the proposed structure so that a "blank wall" or "box" does not face the east, thus giving the perception of closing off or discouraging access to the downtown area from the Elm-Oak Corridor and other areas to the east;

- Minimizing the span of the structure over Ellicott Street and Washington Street to the extent practicable;

- Development and incorporation of site-specific and community-approved design guidelines that ensure successful integration of large-scale construction within the context of the project site. Draft design guidelines are discussed further in Appendix E; and

- Incorporation of Green Design elements, as identified in Appendix F of the DEIS.

Modified No-Action Alternative

The DEIS estimates that if current trends that are not addressed by any meaningful capital improvements to the center were to continue, the expected number of out-of-town conventioneers would fall from a Year 2000 estimate of 41,667 to 31,256 in 2007. The direct spending accounted for by these visitors on hotels, restaurants, shops, and other venues would amount to an estimate of approximately $21.4 million. The direct spending estimates for 2007 were based on a $685 multi-day expenditure per out-of-town visitor.

The Modified No-Action Alternative provides an opportunity to mitigate the projected continued decline in conventions, the project continued decline in out-of-town visitors attending events at the existing convention center, and the resulting decline in economic impacts to the local economy resulting from the existing convention center, while not constructing a $212 million convention center at this time. The Modified No-Action Alternative is a means to minimize the decline in the usage of the existing convention center due to its outdated facilities and condition, until such time as funding sources are identified or a regional solution to providing a state-of-the-art convention center is identified.

6 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Both the demolition of the existing on-site buildings and the subsequent construction and operation of a new convention center will require the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of certain human, material, and financial resources.

Energy resources, principally in the form of gasoline, diesel fuel, and electricity (nonrenewable forms of energy), will be irretrievably utilized during the demolition and construction phases of the project. Natural gas and electricity are expected to be the primary types of energy committed to the operation of the convention center. While the demolition of the buildings that currently occupy the 15-acre Mohawk site will result in the irretrievable loss of the structures themselves, a photographic record will be maintained of the structures that are deemed to be important or significant by the SHPO. Before demolition of the structures determined to be potentially significant by the SHPO, the structures will be investigated and evaluated pursuant to SHPO requirements.

The approval and development of the preferred site, the Mohawk site, for the new convention center will also require the long-term commitment of land on the site for the duration of the project. During this period, other potential uses of the area, such as housing or small-scale commercial uses, will be precluded on all portions of the site where development exists or is proposed. The land use changes associated with the development of the convention center on the Mohawk site may be considered a resource loss; in particular, the loss of the existing businesses on site.

The project involves the initial investment of public and private funds. However, these financial resource commitments may be recouped over the long-term operation of the facility in terms of fees for the rental of convention space, increased taxes paid on adjacent properties, and other revenues generated either directly or indirectly by development. In addition, projected short- and long-

term economic impacts are expected to offset much of the cost of the new convention center. Consequently, the initial financial investments in the project represent long-term, rather than irreversible or irretrievable, commitments of resources.

In addition, the construction of the new convention center will require the use of labor. Although representing an irretrievable commitment of human resources, this employment will result in beneficial impacts on the local economy.

7

Unavoidable Adverse Effects

Plans for construction or expansion/renovation of the new convention center would be consistent with plans for redevelopment of the downtown Buffalo area. The new convention center has been carefully analyzed for potential long-term benefits/impacts on the city, county, and state in general by analyzing the effects on the local economy, particularly on hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues, and the potential effects on the surrounding environment. This analysis of reasonable alternatives will allow the County to make a determination of the best possible plan for the Buffalo Convention Center. Mitigation methods for potential impacts associated with the implementation of the preferred action have been described in Section 5, Mitigation Measures. This section discusses the unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated.

Unavoidable adverse impacts are defined as those that meet the following two criteria:

- There are no reasonable practicable mitigation measures that eliminate the impact; and

- There are no reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that would meet the purpose and need of the action, eliminate the impact, and not cause other or similar significant adverse impacts.

The demolition of the existing structures on the proposed Mohawk site and the construction and operation of the convention center would result in minor, unavoidable, adverse impacts on air quality, noise, traffic, parking, historic preservation, and urban design. These impacts, which are predominately short-term and localized in the vicinity of the project site, are described below.

The demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the construction of the proposed convention center will temporarily cause

minor air and noise emissions. Air emissions will result from the operation of demolition equipment, and dust and debris will be generated by the wrecking activities. The demolition will cause occasional noise impacts, which will primarily affect pedestrians and motorists in and around the immediate project site, but they are not considered significant due to its location in an urban setting and the noise typically associated with urban areas. Because intermittent noise will be associated with demolition and construction activities; the occasional increases in sound levels are expected to be short term and temporary and will cease when construction activities are complete. These unavoidable impacts will be minimized by adherence to environmentally sound construction practices and by conformance to all applicable federal, state, and local regulations and guidelines.

In addition, the construction and operation of the facility will ultimately require the permanent closure of Mohawk Street between Washington and Ellicott Streets. These street closings will permanently change the historic street network and would alter local traffic patterns. It is not expected that the resulting shift in traffic flows would adversely affect the viability of commercial and industrial facilities located in the project vicinity, as the preferred site proposal would also restore vehicular traffic on Mohawk Street between Pearl and Washington Streets.

The discontinued use of the existing convention center will be unavoidable; however, the reuse alternatives for the existing convention center have been studied in this EIS (see Section 3).

Parking problems would also be caused by the unavoidable loss of the 600-space Mohawk Ramp public parking facility on the Mohawk Site. The effects would be mitigated by the creation of the 1,250-space parking facility for the convention center; however, some demand for parking in the vicinity of the new convention center is still expected to remain.

The demolition of existing on-site buildings and the construction and operation of the convention center will also unavoidably impact some historic structures and the existing character of the urban area in the vicinity of the Mohawk Site as well as within the streetscape. Thirty of the existing 46 buildings in the project area will be demolished after acquisition. Of these structures, five have been identified as potentially significant by the state and are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These structures will be photo-documented and addressed in detail as part of the additional cultural resource studies to be conducted pursuant to

SHPO recommendations if the County determines to move forward with construction of the convention center at the preferred site.

Construction of a new Buffalo Convention Center on the preferred site will result in long-term adverse visual impacts due to the permanent closure of Mohawk Street, Blossom Alley, and Hersee Street, which are remaining examples of earlier property configurations throughout the downtown. Placement of a large mass on the Mohawk Site will restrict all views north and south along Ellicott and possibly Washington Street, and will eliminate short street views down Mohawk Street. The convention center structure would be much larger in scale than any other buildings in proximity. In addition, the convention center would result in the unavoidable creation of a 0.25-mile tunnel along Ellicott Street to provide for event space without closing an important north-south connector road in downtown Buffalo. If the facility makes a direct connection to Main Street, this same negative feature would occur across Washington Street.

8 Growth-Inducing Aspects of the Proposed Action

The proposed action is expected to have the potential to induce growth in the Buffalo area. Redevelopment of the proposed Mohawk site into a new and larger convention center and headquarters quality hotel is expected to increase the economic activity in the City of Buffalo through the amount of new construction and long-term salary and procurement expenditures by private businesses. Visitors would spend a portion of their disposable income in the regional economy, including local shops and services in the area. Businesses and other users of the convention center would require services and supplies from other merchants and businesses throughout Western New York. Throughout and after the development period, the proposed action would be expected to induce new growth in businesses and support services, particularly in the hotel industry.

Development of a convention center at the Waterfront Site also would have potential positive growth-inducing impacts. These impacts would not be as beneficial as the Mohawk Site's due to its location, farther from other downtown developments, which would benefit from indirect impacts (i.e., Theatre District, restaurants, bars, entertainment, etc). In addition, development of a convention center at the Waterfront Site would adversely affect the potential growth of HSBC Bank by precluding its potential expansion onto this site at some point in the future.

Implementation of the Modified No Action Alternative would minimize the projected decline in facility use and attendance figures, and thus would result in the opportunity for some growth inducing impacts over the No-Action Alternative.

This expected growth associated with the development of a new convention center (or the Modified No-Action Alternative) is considered a positive impact because the decline in population and economic activity over the past 30 years has left the City of Buffalo

with excess infrastructure. Use of existing, underutilized urban infrastructure to support redevelopment of vacant lands within the City of Buffalo as an alternative to extending new infrastructure into suburban greenfields to support similar development is a necessary component for fighting urban and suburban sprawl. While the convention center is expected to result in some growth, it is the kind of urban-focused growth that needs to be encouraged throughout the Buffalo region to counteract the urban sprawl that is evident.

A vast area of downtown Buffalo, including many of the buildings on the proposed Mohawk site, has been vacant and abandoned since the City's loss of steel-making and related industries. These industries employed thousands of workers that lived in the City of Buffalo, utilizing area roadways and city services, but also contributed to the life of these cities' neighborhood shops and services, home improvement and maintenance, and community organizations and civic groups. The growth-inducing aspects of the proposed action are considered positive and would encourage a rebirth of Buffalo.

The growth-inducing aspects of the proposed action can be realized if the proposed convention center site is selected through the objective evaluation of impacts presented in this EIS and as a result of coordinated planning efforts. Long-term economic growth will occur through a regional perspective, not a myopic one. It is important to note that as both the Buffalo Convention Center and the Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center cater to similar groups, there is some degree of competition within geographically proximate urban centers. It is generally believed that while the City of Buffalo serves as the region's economic core, catering to business, Niagara Falls focuses on the tourism industry. A new convention center, while catering to business-related events, can be tied into local development efforts such as housing, commercial development, tourism, or urban redevelopment initiatives to induce long-term effects on the local economy.

9 Effects on the Use and Conservation of Energy

Development projects associated with the proposed convention center are expected to have a minor, but long-term, impact on the use of energy during construction and operation. Construction will require the use of nonrenewable sources of energy, mostly in the form of gasoline, diesel fuel, and lubricating oils. These energy resources will be used for demolition, site grading, and excavation, as well as for project construction. Operation will require the use of energy for heating and cooling buildings and manufacturing processes.

Indirect energy use would also be associated with gasoline use of employees and visitors getting to and from the convention center. The proposed Mohawk site offers alternative transportation through either rail or bus for employees or visitors. Visitors also would have the option of staying at either the newly constructed headquarters-quality hotel or other area hotels, which would be within walking distance of the convention center.

Natural gas and electricity will be the primary types of energy committed to the operation of the project. Conventional means of energy conservation will be incorporated in the design of the new building. In addition, the proposed project will conform to the requirements outlined in the New York State Energy Conservation and Construction Code. The new convention center is expected to be more energy efficient than the existing center.

10

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